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OLD LONDON BRIDGE

G. H. RODWELL



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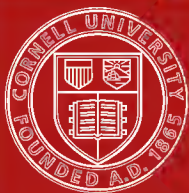
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Half-Forgotten Books

OLD LONDON BRIDGE

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Edited by E. A. BAKER, M.A.

Author of "A Descriptive Guide to the Best Fiction."

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OLD LONDON BRIDGE

A ROMANCE OF THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY

BY *Duonaparte*
George
G. HERBERT RODWELL

| WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY
ERNEST A. BAKER, M.A.



LONDON : GEORGE ROUTLEDGE & SONS, LTD.
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1904

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DRAMATIS PERSONÆ

WILLIAM HEWET, *clothworker of Old London Bridge, sometime Lord Mayor of London.*

DAME ALYCE HEWET, *his wife.*

ANNE, *his daughter.*

FLORA GRAY, *her maid-servant.*

EDWARD OSBORNE } *Hewet's apprentices.*
HENRY HORTON }

THE CRIPPLE OF THE BRIDGE.

WILLIAM, *the Bridge Shooter.*

HIS MOTHER, *a supposed witch.*

FATHER BRASSINJAW, *a drunken and rascally priest.*

THE BLEAR-EYED BULLY

BELTHAM SPIKELEY, *his twin brother*

RAY THE CLIPPER

NAN, *Ray's paramour, Spikeley's wife*

DIDDLE'EM DOWNY, *alias KNOWY THE NEWSMAN, a noted comic singer.*

DICK CHECKLOCKE, *a smith*

JOHN CATCHEMAYDE, *a bowyer*

SILKWORM, *a stringer*

An Arrowmaker

JOHN STOW, *the future historian.*

Abbess of the Minories Convent.

EVELINE, *a blind girl, afterwards found to be the heiress of Andrew Horton.*

SIR FILBUT FUSSY, *a dandy who courts Hewet's wife.*

LORD GEORGE TALBOT, *disguised as Walter Lerue, an artist - and - of Anne Hewet.*

NINO, *his servant, accomplice of Spikeley, &c.*

THOMAS, *LOED CROMWELL, Henry VIII.'s minister.*

WALTER CROMWELL, *Brewer of Putney, his father.*

HENRY VIII., *King of England.*

JANE SEYMOUR, *his queen.*

INTRODUCTION

GEORGE HERBERT BUONAPARTE RODWELL (1800-52) was better known probably as a theatrical manager and a composer of musical plays than as a novelist, although he produced two stories besides "Old London Bridge," namely, "Memoirs of an Umbrella" in 1845 and "Woman's Love" in 1846. The present novel was published in 1849. He came of a family that had long been connected with the stage. His brother, James Thomas Gooderham Rodwell, was a playwright and lessee of the Adelphi Theatre, and on his death in 1825 George Herbert Rodwell succeeded him as part proprietor. In 1828 he was appointed professor of harmony and composition at the Royal Academy of Music, and two years later published a treatise on "The First Rudiments of Harmony." He had already begun to write the numerous and multifarious series of farces, operettas, and other musical pieces that are down to his name in Grove's "Dictionary of

Music" and elsewhere. One of the most successful things he produced was the farce of *Teddy the Tiler*, written for the Irish comedian Tyrone Power. It had a remarkably successful run, and encouraged him to write a number of similar pieces. Rodwell was usually lucky in securing good actors to interpret his dramatic pieces. For some years he was musical director of the Adelphi Theatre, and in 1836 he attained the same position at Covent Garden. He advocated with much persistence the establishment of a National Opera. Two collections of his songs, which were melodious and very popular, were published under the titles "Songs of the Sabbath Eve" and "Songs of the Birds." He married a daughter of Liston, the comedian, but S. C. Hall states that the marriage turned out unhappily. He died at Pimlico in 1852.

In "Old London Bridge" Rodwell gives us a sensational version of the story of a well-known man of Tudor times, Sir Edward Osborne, sometime Lord Mayor of London and establisher of the fortunes of the ducal house of Leeds. Osborne, who was born about 1530 and lived to the year 1591, was one of the most illustrious of the merchant princes that the City of London has produced. In 1566 or 1567 he succeeded to the mansion, the estates, and the extensive

business of his father-in-law, Sir William Hewett, and was soon recognised as one of the wealthiest English merchants. His foreign trade was immense. He became Governor of the Turkey Company, which was afterwards incorporated under the style of "Merchants of the Levant trading to Turkey and Venice," a powerful body that offered to defray the ambassadorial expenses to the Porte in return for their royal charter. He owned lands in several parts of the country, the largest in Yorkshire, although he did not reside there on account of the distance from the capital. He was Sheriff of London in 1575 and Lord Mayor in 1583, when, in accordance with custom, he was knighted by Queen Elizabeth. He was elected to Parliament for the City in 1586. His son, Sir Hewett Osborne, was father of Sir Edward Osborne, Baronet, of Kniveton, in Yorkshire, and the son of the last mentioned was the famous politician of the Restoration and the Revolution, Sir Thomas Osborne, first Duke of Leeds, but most familiarly remembered in history as the Earl of Danby. A graphic picture of that sagacious statesman, at the time of the fictitious Popish Plot and the terrible judicial murders instigated by Titus Oates, is drawn by Emma Robinson in "Whitefriars."

A little later than Rodwell's novel, in 1851, the lady known in literature as "Y^e Author of 'Mary Powell'" wrote one of her charming little historical studies on this same theme. It is entitled "The Colloquies of Edward Osborne, Citizen and Clothworker of London." Miss Manning keeps more faithfully than Rodwell to the traditional events of the story, which she casts into the form of autobiography, Osborne beginning the narrative of his life on May-Day 1547, with the incident of his apprenticing to Hewett. It is not quite certain whether this year or 1544 is the correct date: Rodwell takes the liberty of making it 1536, in order to bring in Henry VIII.'s persecutions and the arbitrary doings of Lord Cromwell and his myrmidons, all which, of course, are matters quite foreign to the actual history of Hewett and Osborne. The historical events that balance the private story in Miss Manning's version are the death of Edward VI., the ten days' reign of Lady Jane Grey, the accession of Mary, and the savage persecutions that ensued. Many of the traditional incidents of Osborne's life are repeated in both stories. His famous leap into the Thames from the balcony of the Golden Fleece to save little Anne Hewett is one of these. That gallant feat of their ancestor is

commemorated by the Dukes of Leeds in a picture at Hornby Castle, and is represented also in the hall of the Clothworkers' Company. Hans Holbein is said to have been a lodger with the Hewetts soon after their marriage, and to have painted the portrait of Mistress Alice Hewett, who was of great beauty. She does not appear in Miss Manning's story, which represents the merchant as a widower, his sister keeping house for him. Lord Talbot was really Anne Hewett's suitor and Osborne's rival. How Anne prefers her adopted brother and the man who saved her life to the courtly fortune-hunter is told very charmingly by Miss Manning, and with the subdued humour that is one of her best characteristics. Here is her sketch of this actor in both versions of the story :

“For good Looks, there was no Fault to find in my Lord : he had that Easiness of Carriage and Manner which I think none but young Lords have. He took not much upon him, considering what he was and with whom ; and, for the Rest, he was pleasant, but not bright. His Hands were womanish for Softness, and I heard from *Damaris*, who had it from his Men, that one Reason thereof was, he never washed them in cold Water, only dabbed

them a little with a soft Napkin. Methought rather than that, I would choose my Hands of a little coarser Grain. I think he parleyed for a Quarter of an Hour on the Christian Names of his ancestry, how the Heads of his House had been alternately a *Richard* and a *Gilbert*, a *Richard* and a *Gilbert*, for I wot not how many Generations; and then how the Name of *George* got in, and then of *Frauncis*, and how he was a *George* again . . . flimsy Talk and tedious. Mistress *Anne* sat wondrous quiet, and once gave me, across the Table, such a Look! Methought if she were secretly amusing herself, I had no need to be so jealous unto Death as I felt."

While Miss Manning, by a few delicate touches, manages to give a pleasant aroma of antiquity to the manner and language of the supposed autobiographer, Rodwell frankly casts his dialogue into modern English, going so far even as to put modern slang and modern mispronunciation into the mouths of Tudor Cockneys. On the other hand, he takes great pains to get his antiquarian stage properties right. His pictures of old London—the streets, the great houses, the brave old customs, and the ceremonial usages of holidays and fair days, show that he has studied the history and anti-

quities of the City with genuine enthusiasm. A word that occurs repeatedly in his references to the Bridge, namely, "Sterlings," is explained by Miss Manning: "Then I noted at the Foot of each Pier, strange Projections of Timber-work, and askt my Mother what they were, and she could not tell me. But a Man that overheard me, said they were called Sterlings, and were strong Piles of Wood driven into the Bed of the River. Also he told me the Bridge was sixty Feet above the Water, and that its Founder, *Peter of Colechurch*, lay y-buried in the Chapel on the Bridge; and more he would have added, but for the Interposure of my Mother, who said, 'Come, Child, we linger,' and drew me away."

Rodwell's historical romance belongs to the same class as those which Harrison Ainsworth was writing contemporaneously with so much rapidity and such enormous profit. The English historical novel began with "Longsword," "The Old English Baron," "The Castle of Otranto," and similar stories, in which the manners, dress, and other conditions of times long past were adopted merely as the most suitable scenery for a tale of the marvellous and the terrible. Historical fiction has largely retained this character to the present day. It is still the

natural field for the romanticist and the writer of melodrama. In spite of many attempts to represent bygone epochs seriously and with as much truth and accuracy as may be, it is still a rare thing comparatively for historical realism to be something more than a cloak and an artifice, as it is triumphantly in "Henry Esmond," "John Splendid," and "Richard Yea-and-Nay." In Ainsworth's long series of romances, despite his painstaking accuracy of chronology and local colour, the Gothic element predominates over the historical. In "Old London Bridge" Rodwell mixes the two in similar proportions, and obtains very similar effects. The crimes of Horton, Spikeley, and the Blear-eyed Bully; strange beings like the blind Eveline, the mis-shapen Cripple of the Bridge, Nan the Clipper, and the old Witch, and scenes like the burning of London Bridge, the murder in the Cardinal's Hat, and the thieves' fight in the Clink, are just the melodramatic things, not without a strong infusion of the grotesque, that Ainsworth, Lytton, and Hugo loved far better than any historical accuracy.

E. A. B.

October 1903.

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OLD LONDON BRIDGE

AN HISTORICAL ROMANCE

CHAPTER I.

Hail, bounteous May, that dost inspire
Mirth and youth, and warm desire;
Woods and groves are of thy dressing,
Hill and dale doth boast thy blessing.
Thus we salute thee with our early song,
And welcome thee, and wish thee long.—MILTON.

IN the street of the Bridge—OLD LONDON BRIDGE—upon the afternoon of May-day, 1536, not a shop-door was to be seen without its little knot of gossips, laying their heads together in a vain endeavour to solve some important mystery; every window was occupied by two or three, or more heads, piled one above the other, nodding and shaking and locking more wise than those wise heads had ever looked before.

From the upper windows, apprentice boys, who had not been allowed to go a-maying, seemed to be hanging out to dry, so far did their bodies reach down in endeavouring to get within earshot of the wondrous conjectures uttered by those beneath.

Around one of the doors stood a rather larger crowd than the others; above their heads swung a tremendous sign—called “The Bag of Wool and the Golden Fleece”—and over the shop to which this sign belonged, was written, in large well-formed letters—

“WILLIAM HEWET, CLOTHWORKER AND MERCHANT.”

“Well,” said John Catchemayde, the bowyer from next door—“What does honest neighbour Hewet say? I’ll wager the best bow in my shop, that if Master Hewet do but open his mouth, and speak his mind aloud, we shall hear *something*.” This did not appear to be a very hazardous wager, but Catchemayde looked around, with that peculiar expression of countenance which men at times put on when they have a mis-giving of having gone a little too far, and tremble for the consequences; but a knowing twitch of the head, and a slight wink from all the bystanders, as much as to say, “Old birds are not caught with chaff,” soon relieved him of his doubt; and Dick Checklocke, the smith, after a rather long and appropriate oath, observed—“No, no, friend Catchemayde, you don’t catch us—we know Master Hewet as well as you do; and well we know that what Master Hewet does say—he does say; and what Master Hewet doesn’t say—he doesn’t!” Then in accordance with the fashion of the time, he sent forth another long oath, something about the “Beard of St. Vulcan,” adding that he’d take Master Hewet’s word, even before that of his own father confessor.

Such a wicked assertion made every one in the crowd shudder, which Checklocke observing, crossed himself devoutly, and set his lips off at full gallop, but uttered no sound. At the conclusion of this inward confession, he called aloud upon the saints to bear witness that he meant no harm.

“But I repeat it,” chimed in John Catchemayde. “Yes, I repeat it, what does Master Hewet say?”

The person thus called upon was a tall handsome man, of middle age, with a countenance whose expression bespoke more of sedateness and steadiness of thought, than of aught approaching to brilliancy of imagination.

His doublet and sleeves were of fine brown broad-cloth, as were also his upper and nether stocks. But the portion of his dress which at once bespoke him a man of substance was his black cloak, being well furred with martens' skins—the gold chain, too, which hung around his neck, also betokened one of no mean wealth; for martens' fur, and ornaments of gold, such as chains or bracelets, or collars, could be worn by none but such as enjoyed a good clear income of at least two hundred marks a year. A pouch, somewhat after the fashion of a lady's reticule of our day, hung by a double silver chain from his girdle, answering all the purposes of a pocket. A square low cap adorned his head, and enormously broad-toed shoes were on his feet. His handsome visage was close shaven, all but the chin, from which a neatly-trimmed beard was permitted to grow. A small flat white shirt collar, turned down about the neck, and a short dagger at his side, completed the appearance of honest Master Hewet.

Master Hewet raised his eyes from off the tablet, upon which he had been setting down memoranda concerning the treasures which then lay around him, and looking into the faces of Catchemayde, Checklocke, and others standing before the open shop front, he heaved a sigh—then shaking his head, again commenced writing upon the tablet.

"Quite enough, quite enough!" exclaimed the bystanders. "Let but Master Hewet shake his head, and we all know what that means."

"Ay, ay; more trouble, more trouble, my masters!" bawled out Catchemayde; "and only to think of it happening upon May-day too, when we all wanted to be so happy and merry."

"As for myself," said Checklocke, "I'll have a dance on Mary Overies' green to-day, though they should make me dance upon nothing to-morrow. They may hang me if they like—and, by St. Thomas of the Bridge, we are pretty used to it now-a-days."

"And shall be more so yet! ho, ho! ha, ha! he, he!"—the last "he, he!" sounding almost like a whistle, as it was screeched out by an ugly cripple, whose voice made all who heard it start suddenly aside, leaving him in an open space exactly before the shop of the Golden Fleece.

This cripple was a young man, but whose head was nevertheless nearly bald: the few hairs which were found there were perfectly white, but so stubborn in their nature that they stuck up on end, like so many needles in a cushion. He wore the badge of servitude upon his left arm, and that badge bespoke him a servant of the Bridge; his crippled leg made it necessary to walk by the assistance of a long staff, which, notwithstanding his lameness, he was known full oft to use, and to good purpose, upon the heads of those who dared offend him.

It was strange that one, whose laugh and sound of speech resembled so much the peacock's screech, should, if he sang, possess a voice of heavenly sweetness: let him but sing, and all his deformities, even all his spite, were, by the power of that spell, forgotten.

"Yes, ye dainty pets of mother Nature!" he exclaimed, "ye straight-limbed fools, ye shall be more and more used to hanging, and burning too, or I know not that master whom Heaven, as we are told, hath placed over you. And there, too, stands *handsome* Master Hewet! But we shall see—we shall—ha, ha! ho, ho! he, he! I shall boil his head yet!—I shall boil his head yet! Yes, brother Hewet, I shall boil your head yet! and, by the blue sky above us, I swear that when I do, I'll drink, and fatten on the broth—ha, ha! ho, ho! he, he!—I'll fatten on the broth." Saying this, the cripple began to move away;

but still, as he went, he continued to mutter, "Yes, yes; I shall boil his head yet—I shall boil his head yet!"

"Well," said Catchemayde, but not until the cripple was quite out of hearing, "Master Hewet must be a sweeter-minded man than I am, to bear the insolence of such a cripple; had he addressed me thus, I would have brained the villain."

"Like enough, like enough," said Checklocke—"that is, if his hands had been tied, and his staff in your own; but you know, as well as most of us, that Willy of the Bridge-gate Tower is no trifling playmate when one comes to handy-cuffs."

"You would cease to be angry," said Master Hewet, now placing his tablet in the pouch by his side, "as I have long since been, and would feel as much pity for that poor afflicted soul as I do, were you but as well acquainted with his story as I am. It is now some years since," the honest merchant went on to say, "when—"

"Eh! what's that?" exclaimed Harry Silkworm, the stringer. "Egad, they're coming at last. Huzza! huzza! They're coming, they're coming at last!"

Every eye and every ear was now suddenly turned towards the northern end of the Bridge, whence arose, amidst distant shouts, the sweeter sounds of music.

The crowd thought no more of Master Hewet, nor of the Cripple's tale, but hurried off to meet the coming throng.

The cavalcade and vast procession announced by the distant sounds which had so suddenly put a stop to the, no doubt, interesting history of the Cripple, was that of the anxiously-awaited Maypole for St. Mary Overies' Green.

Great interest had been exerted in the highest quarters, even with the king, to obtain a reversal of the cruel sentence which had doomed to exile the greatest pride of the city, the lofty Maypole, that had formerly every year reared its proud head upon Corn-

hill, but which had not been used for now some eighteen years—never since the unlucky “Evil May-day” of 1517. So great a riot had then occurred, that the future raising of this mighty shaft was prohibited. It was of such gigantic proportions, that it far o’ertopped the steeple of the neighbouring church, and caused that church henceforth to be denominated St. Andrew Undershaft. Permission had been obtained to raise another on the green of St. Mary Overies, a lovely spot, not far removed from the southern end of Old London Bridge.

As the shouts increased, and thus announced the nearer approach of the Maypole, all the ladies of the Bridge began to wave kerchiefs of every colour of the rainbow.

The head of the procession was led on by a noted band of morris, or *moresque*, dancers, whose wild antics, and jingling bells that hung about their legs, gave infinite delight to all who were fortunate enough to witness the display.

In one hand each of these dancers held a shortish stick, highly adorned with streaming ribbons of varied hues; and in the other, the corner of a bright scarlet handkerchief: these they continually waved about, but all the time dancing with their feet in a fashion perfectly their own.

Wherever a smiling female face appeared at any of the windows, of fairer features than the rest, they all at once pointed their staves towards the spot, making the face more lovely still, by the deep blush their notice had called up; and then they sang—

“From Moorish lands we come, fair maid,
To seek out Beauty’s queen;
But all our toil is now repaid,
Since thy sweet face we’ve seen;”

and kissing their hands to the beauty, with a merry laugh, moved on to repeat their gallantry a few doors off.

The first fair dame they had thus singled out was Alyce Hewet, wife to our honest merchant; and seldom had a fairer face been seen than that of lovely Alyce Hewet: and, yet, beside her stood one, who, although but then a child, gave promise of future loveliness that would, if ever she arrived at womanhood, throw into shade even the sweet features of Dame Alyce, the admitted beauty of the Bridge.

This child was the only daughter of merchant Hewet, and not a little proud did he feel upon that day to observe that not a soul passed by but made some remark to those most near at hand, evidently in admiration of what they saw at the casement of the Golden Fleece.

Next to the morris dancers came the city trumpeters, decked out in their golden coats of state; to these succeeded the loud-sounding kettle drums; the city arms, most richly worked in gold, and silk, and silver, hung down from every instrument. Each pair of drums was slung upon the back of a sturdy clown, who walked before the drummer, and who grinned and laughed as much at the crowd as the crowd grinned and laughed at him.

Then came some hundreds of apprentice boys, dressed all in their best—their cloaks were new and blue, for the summer months were coming. Their white slops, or breeches, were round, and somewhat loose; not so their nether hose, the tightly-fitting broad-cloth stockings, which reaching half way up the leg, were sewn to the slops, and being also white, seemed all in one. Each wore a ribbon of the favourite colour of the ward in which their master lived; their flat caps were all adorned with a sprig of May, and on their shoulders rested the far-famed "Prentice Club."

Close to their heels came the Southwark band of musicians playing upon *shlams*, and other instruments bearing equally euphonious names, followed by a large party of singing girls, whose voices were well sustained by the pleasing accompaniment of flutes and

recorders—that is, large flageolets with theorbos and smaller lutes. After the musicians came a large company of the “Southwark lads,” as a guard of honour to the Lord Mayor, Sir Ralph Waren, who, with the Lady Mayoress mounted behind him on a pillion, rode upon a noble cream-coloured charger, whose gallant bearing, and tossing of whose head, evinced his consciousness of the worthy load he bore. The Mayor and his good lady, whose natal day it happened to be had condescended upon this auspicious occasion to become the Lord and Lady of the May.

Immediately after these came the gorgeous May-pole!

No less than thirty oxen were employed, two by two, to drag it. The ropes by which they were attached to the machine whereon the Maypole lay were covered with flowers of every kind then in bloom, to each horn of the ox was attached a nosegay of sweet herbs and flowers.

The Maypole itself, large as the mast of a ship, was painted in twisted bands of various colours. At several parts enormous hoops hung around the shaft, suspended by variegated ribbons, and thickly covered with hawthorn boughs and eglantine, mixed up with roses. These hoops were made to move easily around the pole, and from them hung down long lines of Flora’s choicest gifts.

The two first oxen were entirely white, and had the honour of being led with golden chains fastened to their horns, by the two wardens of the bridge; the rest were guided by the servants of the Lord Mayor in their state liveries.

The rear of this long and magnificent procession was guarded by two enormous giants, dressed after the fashion of Gog and Magog in Guildhall, and a joyous, wide-mouthed, waggle-tailed dragon, who ever and anon threw out fiery squibs and crackers amongst the crowd.

One great feat of fun was that of all the jesters to-

gether pulling at the dragon's tail, which being made to give way, whenever the man inside liked to let go the string, they all fell down backwards in a heap. The dragon then would turn indignantly around, and puff a quantity of flour from his nostrils, right into the face of any country clown, who, open-mouthed, might be laughing loudest at the fun.

Thus, then, moved on the Maypole merry crowd, who, then, as usual upon all holiday occasions, seemed to forget for a brief space that they lived in a reign of tyranny, deceit, of fire and of blood.

The moment the eyes of the good folk of the Bridge were opened to the splendid delights preparing for them on Saint Mary Overies' Green, it was deemed incumbent upon them to close at once their shops, for who could attend to business at such a time?

These shutters were now being quickly lowered—the bolts passed through—then the master and his dame, maids, apprentices and all were seen issuing from the dwellings, and last of all, the careful master, having closed and locked the outward door, was hurrying after his family, whose anxious haste could brook no delay.

Almost the last of those who left the Bridge was Master William Hewet. On his arm hung his sweet and loving dame, wearing her newest fashioned kirtle of Stamel red, which shewed full bravely from beneath her open-fronted gown of lion colour. On her head she wore the French hood which became her mightily. Behind her walked her pretty serving maid, with head uncovered, but whose luxurious hair, plaited in a most coquettish style, was amply adorned with various knots of ribbon, that made her look provokingly agreeable. In her hand she held the lovely child, whom we noticed at the casement of the Golden Fleece; and after them followed the two apprentice lads.

These youths were both tall—both slim—but both strongly framed.

The one as fair as day, whose ingenuous open countenance bespoke nought but honour and straightforward truth—his name was Edward Osborne.

The other, Henry, or Harry Horton, was proud of his raven locks, and in spite of all commands, would let them grow much longer than the law prescribed, or than were ventured to be worn by any other apprentice of their ward. His eyes were sparkling bright, and black as jet; and, altogether, in spite of the apprentice garb, the blue cloth cloak, with slops and hose of white, stood out a truly handsome lad.

The manners of these two youths were as unlike as were their features. Osborne, as they walked slowly to the Southwark Green, was ever trying to amuse his master's child, by all the little acts of kindness his youthful fancy could devise. Not so, Harry Horton—all his attention was directed towards the Hebe of a maid, the pretty Flora Gray, who seemed, by sundry side glances, to be upon a footing of vastly good understanding.

At the moment they arrived upon St. Mary Overies' Green, maidens, almost buried in flowers, had seized the long hanging floral cords which depended from the Maypole hoops, and now were dancing round and round, singing a new May-day verse, written for the occasion by Sir Filbut Fussy, and in which, at stated times, all the bystanders joined, by way of chorus; and thus it was they sang—

Maidens—"Which is the sweetest month in all the year?"

Bystanders—"Why, the merry, merry, merry, merry month of May!"

Maidens—"When fall the birds' notes sweetest on the ear?"

Bystanders—"In the merry, merry, merry, merry month of May!"

Upon this, twelve young girls advanced towards the seat upon which the lord and lady of the May were enthroned, and as they strewed May-flowers and roses before them, they also sang—

"If May be fairest—if May be sweetest—
If May be birth-time of hope, oh! then say,
Which of the months in the twelve is the meetest
To father our fair lady's own natal day?"

Then it was that the whole assembly thundered out and danced about like mad, as they exclaimed—

"Why, the merry, merry, merry, merry, merry month of May."

Oh, how merrily did they sing it!—and how merrily did they dance it!—and how right merrily did Master Harry Horton appear to foot it away with the poor simple girl, Dame Hewet's maiden, Flora Gray; while Edward Osborne delighted the good merchant, by dancing and playing with his darling child, the lovely little Anne.

We shall not draw too heavily upon the patience of the gentle reader, by detailing all the good haps, nor all the mishaps, which happened upon this happy day—nor how the Duke of Shoreditch, King Henry's mock Duke of Archers, with all his mock marquises, and counts, and earls, and merry men all, challenged the Prince Arthur, another mock, but formally-acknowledged, dignitary, with all his knights of the round table, who had come from Mile End gorgeously attired.

The law compelling all masters to teach their apprentices the bowman's art, a trial of skill took place amongst these young tyros; but of this we shall give no further account, than to state how Harry Horton missed the butt every shot, and that Edward Osborne hit it no less than four times out of five; and perhaps he would have hit it the last shot, but just as he let loose his fifth shaft, a disturbance arose that had nearly put an unpleasant end to all the day's sports.

The cry of—"A witch! a witch!" resounded from a crowd of unfeeling lads hard by, who were quickly headed and encouraged by Harry Horton, to hunt a poor old woman. She screamed, and cried for mercy;

the more hopeless her state, the more the shouts and laughter increased; they bade her "run for her life, or she should be ducked till she drowned." Harry Horton cried out—"Tie her by the legs, and drag her to the pond."

At this moment Edward Osborne dashed into the middle of the crowd, club in hand, and standing over the poor old woman, who had sunk upon the earth, he, with about three swings of his formidable weapon, in an instant cleared a space of some yards around him.—"You cowardly curs!" exclaimed young Edward, his mild eyes now flashing fire as he spoke; "is an old woman the only game you have the courage to hunt? Now, mark me, all of you—if but one dare advance a single step, until I have raised this poor old soul, and put her in a place of safety, by my master's honour, and that's my own, I'll fell him to the ground!"

"Hollo! young champion of the *young and fair*," roared out Harry Horton, laughing aloud, and then added, in a savage tone, "let her alone, or we let not you alone, or if you must have a bout at fisty-cuffs, have at you." Saying this, he, with two others, who were now armed with their clubs, rushed forward upon Edward, as he was at that moment stooping down to assist the wretched woman. What might have been his fate, thus taken at disadvantage, we know not, but just in the very nick of time, up sprang two new friends to the weaker side, and in a moment more, Horton and his valiant comrades found themselves grovelling in the dust.

One of the new comers turned out to be our newly-made acquaintance, the Cripple of the Bridge, the other was a ragged youth, who having dexterously disarmed Harry Horton, knocked him down with his own club: the cripple had settled the other two.

"Come, mother, come," said the ragged lad, "I knowed you'd get into trouble if you comed here."

"Take her away quickly," said Edward; "remove her while she is safe, and I, and our sturdy friend here, will keep the rabble back."

"Give me your hand," said the cripple, addressing Edward Osborne, "I'll shake hands with *you*—but it's not every hand I would shake—but you are a brave lad, and a kind—you have a heart, and that is more than we can find in every breast; yes, you have a heart, for you will befriend the old—even the *ugly*. I would that you had a better master."

"Where shall we find one?" replied Edward; "his equal does not exist in London town."

"Good as you think him," said the cripple, chuckling, "I shall boil his head yet," and again he laughed.

As Edward turned about to rejoin his master, he was accosted by the poor ragged lad, who having found a shelter for the old woman, now returned to offer his simple, but heartfelt thanks.

After making a thousand bows and scrapes, he said—"I vish I vos a gentleman born and bred—for then I would ask to take your hand, I am so grateful for what you have done to-day. That poor old woman, Master Edward, for I knows who you are vel enough, is my old mother, and I love her more than my life."

"Well, then," said Edward, smiling, giving him his hand, "a lad who loves his mother as you seem to do, cannot be a bad fellow at bottom; but I owe you much more thanks than you do me. I know the spite of my scowling brother apprentice there; but for you he'd have cracked my head or his own club, I'll swear. I know that I have given him mortal offence by my good luck with the long bow. But tell me, who and what are you, since you know who I am?"

"Vy," replied the lad, "I'm not exactly a prince, as you may see with half an eye, nor am I beggar: I keeps open house at the foot of Old Swan Lane,

and lots of lords and ladies, and nobles does come to see me, I can tell you, and takes me by the arm. Vy, I've been the support of hundreds on 'em."

"Speak more plainly, there's a good fellow," said Edward, not at all comprehending what the lad could possibly mean.

"Vy, you see, how they owes their support to me is this—I keeps a board for 'em to walk on from the shore to their boats."

"Oh, I understand you now," said Edward; "you are a Jack-in-the water."

"Yes," replied the other, "I'm a Jack-in-the-vorter, but I'm a Villiam out on it."

"Then your name, I suppose, is William," inquired Osborne; "but have you no other?"

"To be sure I have; I've three names altogether," replied the lad; "I'm Jack—I'm Villiam—and I'm Billy the Bridge-shooter!" this last he uttered with evident feelings of pride.

"Billy the Bridge-shooter! that's an odd name," observed Edward; "how came you by that?"

"You see," said the other, "almost all men in this world excels in summut, and my summut vos found out almost as soon as I vos born."

"Indeed! and pray what might it be?"

"Vy, I vos born corky."

"What!" exclaimed Edward, completely taken by surprise.

"Vot! vy, corky. You knows vot a cork is, I suppose? Vell, then, I vos born corky—that is, I'm so uncommon light, that if you throws me into the vorter, old Nick himself can't make me sink."

"Your definition of the term," said Edward, smiling, "is perfectly satisfactory; but may I ask you," and Edward again smiled, "may I ask how your corkiness was first discovered?"

"I'll tell you how it happened; and if I hadn't been born corky, I shouldn't a been here now to tell you vot I'm going to tell you. Vell then—mother

vos ill in bed, and fast asleep. Father vos a blind man, but uncommon clever in household concerns, and always looked arter the cooking—and such a cook he vos—”

“But if he were blind,” said Edward, “how could he see which things he wanted.”

“Oh, that vos easy enough! he used to stick his finger into all the things vun arter the other, and suck it, until he comed to the vun he vanted. Now, he and mother were dotingly fond of boiled sucking-pig, and on the day I’m speaking on, father, who had been drinking a leetle more than he ought to have done, and had made me drink a leetle drop too, just to keep me quiet while he vos at his cooking, laid me down dead asleep on the table, by the side of the pig: off he goes—back he comes with the only saucepan ve had, vich vos an uncommon large ’un—fills it half full of vorter—pops it on the fire—pops me into it, instead of the pig, and then pops on the lid. As I happened to go in flat on my back, there I floated safe enough, for nothing *can* make me sink. By-and-by, as you may suppose, the vorter began to get rather too vorm to be pleasant; and then, oh, my viskers! didn’t I begin to bawl, and kick about? Off vent the lid—splash vent the vorter—mother began to scream out that the devil vos in the pot—in rushed the neighbours to larn the cause of such alarm; when, fortunately, vun on ’em, happening to be a priest, who didn’t care for the devil or all his imps, volked boldly up to the saucepan, and took me out, to the astonishment of all. It vos soon settled, that I had been bevitched, and changed, for a time, into a pig,—the real vun the priest took away with him to his own house, declaring that—‘He would first roast the evil fiend,’ as he called the pig, ‘and then dewour it;’ and ve have every reason to believe he did. And now, master Edward, do you think I am wrong in saying I vos born corky. It’s because I’m corky, I’m called the Bridge-shooter. Ven a boatman’s afraid to go

through by himself, vy, I shoots through with him. If I happens to shoot him into the vorter, I shoots in arter him, and picks him up, ~~for~~ nothing *can* make me sink. By-the-by, a thought has just struck me—can you swim?”

“Not like a fish!” said Edward; “no, I have often tried, but always to but little purpose.”

“That,” replied Billy the Bridge-shooter, “is because you have never been properly taught. Now will you make me downright happy?”

“How can I do that?” said young Osborne.

“Vy, let me larn you to keep your head above vorter—it’s an uncommon useful hart. You have saved my old mother’s life, and do now, let me teach you to save your own. In a single week, you shall be as corky as I am.”

“Well, I must confess,” said Edward, “that is a temptation not easily to be withstood; and, upon one condition, I accept your offer—you must let me pay you for it.”

“You’ve paid me afore hand all I means to take,” replied the other. “No, no, swim for love; and pay me, if you likes, for any other little artful *dot* I may teach you.”

The expression, “*dot*,” he evidently used in the manner we, nowadays, employ that elegant little word, “*dodge*;” but we have no doubt that, to the “*gents*” of those days, it was equally expressive and intelligible.

And so it was soon arranged, to the great delight of Billy the Bridge-shooter, that, every morning at daybreak, young Osborne should take his swimming lesson.

With this understanding, they separated; Jack-o’-the-water was soon lost in the crowd, and Edward hastened to rejoin his master and mistress.

The moment he came within sight of them, he perceived that something had gone amiss; his master looked angrily—his mistress snatched back the child,

who had made a movement, as if to run and meet her playmate.

Poor Osborne, who, in spite of all his endeavours, had never yet been able to ingratiate himself fully into the good favour of his mistress, saw now, by her looks, that he was, from some cause or other, lower than ever in her estimation.

The truth was, that Harry Horton had been beforehand, and made his own story good, by reversing the whole facts of the case. Tears actually came into Horton's eyes, as he related Osborne's cruel turn of mind, that could feel delight in afflicting the aged and infirm. "Why does he not," he continued, "do as I do?—why does he not associate more with the good father of St. Thomas-of-the-Bridge, instead of always being with such thieves as that lad who attends the boats at the Swan-stairs? they are always together—always! And only to think, now,—look there, you can see them both—but alas! they are always together. Good heavens!" he ejaculated, as if a sudden thought had seized him; and then continuing, as though he had been merely thinking aloud—"But, no, no! that cannot be!—and, yet—"

"Yet, what?" exclaimed Alyce, with anxiety, "speak plainly; for myself, I have always doubted the sincerity of young Osborne; the more so since our saintly father, Brassinjaw, first pointed out to me that such unceasing propriety of conduct and such unvarying attention to his every duty, formed an unerring proof of inward hypocrisy!"

"Why," said Harry Horton, "it suddenly flashed across my mind, seeing what I have just witnessed—but Heaven grant I may be wrong—that it was within the pale of possibility, that Edward and that ragged ruffian might be found to know more of the robbery at my good master's house, and for which a poor fellow, whom I sincerely believe to be as innocent as I am, is now in jail, and should the trial go against him, will be hanged. You know," he con-

tiqued, "that it was Edward who first discovered the robbery, which had been so ingeniously contrived, that little short of previous knowledge of what was to be done, could have detected it. He was ever the enemy of the poor fellow now in prison, and the sworn friend of the only witness upon whose evidence the life of the accused will hang. Now, putting this and that together, it strikes me that much truth might be elicited, could you obtain permission but for a few minutes to put him to the rack."

"Heaven forbid!" exclaimed the merchant, indignantly. "What! give the son of my oldest and best of friends to the torture, for the sake of a paltry piece or two of cloth of gold? Rather would I toas the whole of the contents of the Golden Fleece into the Thames!"

"I only spoke for the best, master," said Horton; "and I am sorry, now, I have spoken at all; forget what I have said—I dare say I am wrong—and no doubt a friendly squeeze of the hand means any thing but familiarity." As he said this, he pointed rather insolently towards the distance, exactly at the moment Edward was giving his hand to the grateful ragged lad. "I shall live an enviable life when he shall come to know all I have said."

"But he shall know nothing of what you have said," replied Alyce; "you are a good youth and a worthy, and shall not be exposed to the ill will of any one: and now, Henry, you may go and join the merry-makers."

"No, mistress," he replied; "I will home to my little room, and prepare myself for to-morrow's confession."

As he retired, he looked first at Alyce, then sighed gently, and casting his eyes up to heaven, he looked once more, then wended his way towards the bridge.

Poor Flora Gray looked after him in vain; he seemed to have forgotten that such a person had ever existed; she blushed too, but her blush was felt, was

understood, and with it came a frown, for she was angered at his neglect.

As Harry Horton hurried along, he let loose to his ill feelings in low murmurings. "So, so!" said he; "I think I have sown some seeds this day in Master Osborne's path, that shall ere long grow up and bear a plenteous harvest of poisonous thorns. He seems born to be my rock-a-head. I wish," he went on, "that simpleton, Flora Gray, would be less fond. I only flirted with her because I thought she could worm out her mistress's secrets; and now, forsooth, she thinks I'm over head and ears in love with her, and looks to be my wife—ha, ha! a pretty wife for Harry Horton! I want no wife—at least of my own. No, no! I want fame and fortune; and I'll have them, or the gallows."

The High-street of Southwark was at that time composed principally of large inns, and the most notorious was the Tabard, opposite St. Margaret's Hill, the well-known tavern at which Chaucer and his pilgrims to Canterbury slept the night before they started on their holy journey. As night came on, numerous bonfires were lighted, and it was before this inn now burned the largest bonfire of the whole, and around it danced the biggest crowd of madcap maids and boys.

As time flew on, the more sober-minded citizens, one by one, with their dames and children, left this wild but highly picturesque scene of frantic revelry.

The strongest, reluctantly, were soon subdued, and laggingly strolled homeward to their welcome beds. The fires themselves seemed tired out at the roaring life they had led, and sinking by degrees became, what all things that have lived must become—dust. And thus ended that merry May-day on Mary Overies' lovely green.

CHAPTER II.

THE SWIMMING LESSON.

There saw I first the dark imagining
Of felony—and all the compassing ;
The cruel ire, red as any glede ;
The pick-purse, and eke the pale drede
Conteke with bloody knife, and sharp menace:
All full of chirking was that sorry place.

CHAUCER.

THICK clouds overspread the heavens, and all around was dark and drear. The cataracts beneath the bridge were at their greatest fall, and came down thundering and raging, as though Old Father Thames was struggling to dash in pieces the mighty chain which Peter of Colechurch had thrown across him !

The old bell of St. Paul's had just proclaimed that the twelfth hour of night had passed away for ever, when a glimmering light might be perceived issuing from the small opening to be found in the basement of Master Hewet's house, which stood exactly over the fifth arch—then for a moment it was obscured—then it shone forth again : and now might be discerned the shadowy form of a man descending by a rope upon the sterling beneath—it was Harry Horton.

Taking from his breast a small silver tube, he placed it to his lips and sent forth one long shrill whistle ; but, loud as it was, it could scarcely be heard above the falling waters, and yet it must have reached the intended ear, for instantly a window over the centre of the sixth arch opened, and another rope was let down, at the end of which was fastened a small ship lantern ; this was wavered from side to side, until it reached the hand of Horton, who, twisting the end

of the rope round his wrist, with a determined bound swung across the flood, and landed upon the opposite sterling. From this sterling a rude ladder led to the house above. Before he mounted, he said to the man who was looking down upon him—"Has he come?"

"Not yet," was the reply; "but he cannot now be long. There are some half-dozen merry blades here; so up, and be as merry as they."

Horton ascended, and once more found himself in the well-known lower drinking-room of the "Cardinal's Hat," the public of worst repute upon the bridge.

Amongst the half dozen ill-looking fellows who sat around a large flaggon of sweet ale, mixed with ardent spirits, was one, who had better, for his own credit, have been elsewhere—it was no less a personage than the saintly Father Brassinjaw!

It was at these midnight meetings that Horton used to gather from this drunken priest the secrets of all his neighbours, and which he treasured up, intending, as time should serve, to turn them to his own account.

The excuse father Brassinjaw made for being there this evening, was that he had seen the newsman come in; and that he, like all the dwellers on the bridge, was anxious to learn the real cause of their recent alarm.

Just as Horton entered, the newsman, a ragged, unwashed fellow, was standing in the midst of the dirty room, relating what was pretty nearly the truth—that—how he had just come from Greenwich, where there had been a tournament—and how that the King's Highness was there, and Nan Bullen too (for so the common people usually called the Queen), and how her brother Lord Rochford and Harry Norris fought—and that how Nan dropped her kerchief, and how Norris took it up and kissed it, pretending to wipe his face—and how the King, swearing a dreadful oath, jumped up, and mounting his horse, galloped

off to London, attended only by six gentlemen—and how Rochford, and Norris, and Sir Francis Western were all arrested—and that how Nan Bullen fainted, and how it was said that all was a planned thing against Nan, because the King had a liking for Jenny Seymour—and how that she would be queen and Nan be burnt to death.

“And serve her right,” roared out Brassinjaw, in rather an unsteady voice;—“she’s a heretic, and deserves to be burnt; and so I would have told the King to his face, had I seen him go by.”

“Neither you, nor any man living, had dared to wag a tongue,” said the host, “had you seen him. He came upon us, too, so unawares, that not a soul upon the bridge, save Master Hewet, who’s always sure to be on the right side of the hedge—no, not one of us flopped down upon our knees as he went past. I hope the not bending of our knees may not prove the breaking of our necks.”

The discourse was here put an end to, as far as Horton was concerned, by the entrance of the man he had been so anxiously awaiting; the man took no notice of any one there save Horton, to whom he made a sign, and lifting up the trap-door, they both descended to the sterling beneath the arch of the bridge.

“Well,” said Horton, “have you seen him?”

“I have,” replied the other, “a white-livered cur, as he is! Why, he has no more pluck than a linnet; he swears, rather than die, he’ll hang us all—a nice friend that, isn’t he? So beautifully as you had planned the robbery too, it must have fallen upon Osborne; and then for that bungling fool to get us all into this mess—I could hardly keep my paws quiet as I looked at him.”

“It is useless railing thus — what is to be done?” said Horton: “I thought that if he were once executed, we were all safe enough; but if he means to peach—”

"Why, they'll hang us up like rats," said the other; "there have been too many robberies of late, for 'em to let one of us escape. Now, his plan is this—he swears that he will not speak out until the last moment—so that if we put Wallace, the weaver, out of the way, there is no other evidence that can scrag our cowardly friend: Osborne ought not to appear, but his evidence does not carry death with it, and it is death only that Miles so fears."

"I will provide for Osborne, somehow or other," said Horton; "but as to murdering the weaver, I don't like it—a man's blood they say never dries up—and it's an awkward sight to be always seeing the red spots dancing before one's eyes."

"Necessity, even the priests confess, has no law," retorted the other; "and besides, if we do take one life, we save another, so that strikes the balance—doesn't it? and I'll answer for it, that Father Brass-injaw won't be over hard upon us at confession, if we do the handsome."

After several plans had been proposed by Horton, short of murder, and rejected by his companion, they parted, Horton, as a sort of excuse to his own conscience, continuing up to the last to affirm, that he would never assent to the taking of life, but inwardly hoping all the while, that his own safety might yet be secured, by the other resting upon his own head the whole weight and guilt of shedding innocent blood.

A few minutes more, and Horton had again twisted the rope round his wrist—again had leaped the raging torrent, and once more had crept in through the window of his sleeping-room.

Poor Osborne, who until this night had never known what it was to lie awake scarcely a moment after his head had been placed upon his pillow, now found himself restless and uneasy. He could in no way account for the strange coolness of his master, and the undisguised displeasure of his mistress—even the smiling Flora Gray had now no smile for him.

He had fallen into an uneasy slumber when he felt himself violently shaken, and opening his eyes he started up in bed, bewildered and astonished, for there he beheld his master with a lamp in his hand standing by his bedside.

"Hush!" said the merchant, placing his finger upon his lip; "get up quickly, but silently. Take this letter to where it is addressed—take this money, too, for you must hire a boat. Your further instructions will be given you at the end of your journey. There is the key of the outward door. I would have none here, not even my wife, know of your going until you be fairly gone." Saying this the merchant extinguished the lamp and left the room.

A few minutes saw Osborne fully prepared. He placed the letter and the purse carefully in his pouch, and with the key in one hand and his shoes in the other, the apprentice descended the stairs as stealthily as the merchant had done a few minutes before.

Although Osborne placed the key in the lock with all the care of a professed housebreaker, yet the lock would creak, and the hinges of the door seemed to say—"Where there is secrecy there is guilt." At all events Osborne felt uncomfortable for a moment, nor did he quite recover his composure until he had hurried on nearly half across the bridge. As he approached the Southwark end of the bridge, he fancied he heard the sound of a lute, as if descending from the skies; but his head was so full of the strange visit of his master, that he at first believed it to be but the creation of an overheated imagination—but no! at every step the sound increased. He had gained the opening of the Bridge-gate Tower, adorned as it then was by the withering heads of those who had fallen, sacrificed to the hate or vengeance of a blood-thirsty tyrant.

The sound of the lute suddenly ceased, and Osborne started; for in the uncertain light of the coming day,

he fancied he saw one of the heads descend from the tall spike on which it had stood, and gaze down upon him from the parapet of that tower of death. In a moment more, and the sound of his own name struck upon his ear. "It is well," said the voice from the tower, "it is well; but whither goest thou *this* way?"

Edward for an instant stood spell-bound, but was soon relieved from his fright by hearing the well-known screeching laugh of the Cripple of the Bridge. "Be not afraid, lad—it is I, thy *friend*, here snug at home, surrounded by my children," and he pointed up to the ghastly heads; "they are poor quiet souls now, and give but little trouble to any one. But tell me, whither goest thou?"

"I know not, Willy," replied Osborne, at once recovering himself, and now remembering that in his hurry to obey his master's commands, he had taken the worst of all methods of doing so, for he had forgotten to read the address upon the letter; he drew it forth, and was about to answer the cripple's question, when his master's injunction recurred to him: "quickly and *silently*," he murmured; then aloud he said—"cannot tell thee, Willy—that is, I *must not*—so fare thee well."

"Ha, ha! ho, ho! he, he—!" laughed the Cripple. "Right, boy, right, do as the world does; turn your back upon your friends when you don't want them." Osborne had turned to retrace his steps, finding his orders indicated an opposite direction.

"Go thy way in peace," said the Cripple; "thou hast my blessing—all is ready for thee; he has been waiting an hour past; if you would be safe, be quick."

Osborne, scarcely heeding what the other said, started at a run, and soon reached the Old Swan Stairs. Now he was more astonished than ever, for there stood Billy the Bridge-shooter, anxiously waiting in one of the best boats, ready to push off at a moment's notice. "Be quick, Master Edward," said

the lad; "it is broad daylight, and we should have been a couple of miles above bridge ere this."

Edward jumped into the boat; the Bridge-shooter pushed off into the middle of the stream, and seizing the oars, in a minute more they were well upon their course.

Osborne looked back upon the bridge, and there plainly saw the cripple running from one to the other, shaking all the tall poles with their ghastly heads upon them, as if in token of his approval at Edward's departure. "It vill be a heavy pull, Master Edward," said the lad, "vhen the tide turns; for it's more nor a mile, I guess, to Putney, isn't it?"

"Putney!" said Osborne, surprised; "how knew you I was thither bound?"

"Vy, didn't you tell me so," replied the other; "that is, the boy you sent vith the money did."

"I sent no boy, nor money either!"

"Didn't you, though! Vell, then, how could I a hired this boat, do you think, if you had not? And how could I a guessed that I vos to be at the Swan-stairs, iustead of the Southwark side, as ve settled; and vos then to row you to Putney?"

"As you seem to know more of my affairs than I do myself," said Osborne, "perhaps, too, you can tell me to *whom* I am going?"

"To be sure I can," was the reply; "ve're a going to old daddy Cromvell, Lord Thomas's father—the blacksmith that vos—the brewer vot is, and precious nice ale he does brew—there's no pizen in that; no, no; all pure malt—no hops there; no, nor no brimstone neither."

It appears almost incredible that a time could ever have been when hops, so highly valued now, so carefully trained and cultured in our days, for the sole purpose of adding value to our far-famed London porter, were considered a vile adulteration, and laws were actually passed making it a heavy crime for brewers to mix either *hops* or brimstone with their malt.

The sun was shining out magnificently, and as Billy the Bridge-shooter had already had a good pull, Osborne, who was himself a good waterman, insisted upon taking his turn at the oars. His attempt gained great praise from his companion, who declared "that if he would but feather his oars a *leetle* more, there were few commoners" (by which he meant not professed waterman) "who could beat him."

They had reached Chelsea, opposite the old church, and steering to the Battersea side, they landed in the fields, and were soon seated upon the luxuriant grass, discussing for breakfast the contents of a certain basket the Bridge-shooter had drawn from the stern of the boat.

After they had thoroughly rested themselves, nothing would satisfy William, as Osborne now called the Bridge-shooter, but he must give the apprentice some idea of what swimming was. In a few minutes more and he was floating like a fish upon the silver Thames. First he swam on one side, then on the other—then he turned over head and heels, and performed a thousand strange antics; now his head was above the water, now his heels—and now he disappeared altogether. At last he said—"Master Edward, pick up a stone that you will know again, and chuck it as far as ever you can into the vorter."

Osborne did as he was directed, and William kept his eye steadfastly fixed upon the spot where it had descended, and swimming there, disappeared beneath the tide.

So long did he remain under the water, that Osborne at last became dreadfully alarmed; he hurried to the boat, not knowing what to do for the best, when, just as he was putting his foot upon it—not more than three yards from him, up rose the lad, with the large stone held between his teeth.

"There, Master Edward, you see I can swim as well with my head under vorter as above it. You see I vent down there, and I comed up here; that's vot

I calls swimming; and you shall do all that too, in less nor a week, or my name's not Villiam."

The Bridge-shooter insisted upon Osborne commencing his lessons that very hour; and while he was prepariog, he said—"Remember, all men are much more corky than they thinks; and it's not so easy to sink, as vun imagines. To keep your head above vorter, keep your arms under it. Ven you vont to dive, stick your chin into your chest; and ven you vonts to come up again, throw your head back, and up you pops. Strike vell out with your arms, your legs, and your feet, all at vunce, and never be afraid—it's fear vot drowns a man, not the vorter. Now, I'll lead you gently out into deep vorter; turn your face right up to the skies, and you vill see how easy it is to float as upright as a dart."

So much confidence had Edward in his instructor, that he obeyed him implicitly; aud, to his infinite satisfaction, he found all the lad had told him come to pass.

So pleased was Osborne with the advance he had made, and so charmed was the instructor with his own cleverness in teaching, and his pupil's aptness in learning, that both entered their boat in the highest state of mutual satisfaction.

Having safely conveyed them to Putney, where old Walter Cromwell received Edward with a hearty welcome, telling him, that all his old friend Hewet desired in his letter should be done; and having given orders to make Edward's humble friend comfortable for that night, we must there leave them for awhile, and return once more to OLD LONDON BRIDGE.

CHAPTER III.

THE MURDER.

What needeth it, therefore, to sermon more ?
For right, as they had cast his death before,
Right, so they have him slain.

CHAUCER.

MORE than a week had now passed away, and young Osborne's absence had scarcely been noticed in the house of Master Hewet. There seemed to be an implied understanding that his name was not to be mentioned. The merchant had told his dame that he had sent him upon a little business, and it would have been unbecoming in a dutiful wife, like Alyce Hewet, to have ventured further question. Horton chuckled at his own supposed cleverness, believing he knew, even better than the merchant, where Edward really was. The little Anne was the only one who evinced any sorrow at his long absence ; but she was easily pacified, when her father foretold her playmate's speedy return.

As the day for the trial of Miles, the robber, drew near, Horton became more and more nervous : he thought, that if Wallace, the weaver, had been found *missing*, which his guilty soul translated, *murdered*, his master must have been apprised of it, ere this, and could not have kept such a circumstance a secret.

For several nights past Harry Horton had waited for hours in the lower drinking-room of the "Cardinal's Hat," but the man with whom he there met before, came not. On the last night but one before the trial, his anxiety had reached a pitch of the greatest mental suffering. Continually did he keep muttering to himself—"Something must be wrong—something must be wrong." At last a heavy foot was heard descending the stairs—the door flew open, and there

the long-expected villain stood. The name this worthy bore amongst his pals was Blear-eyed Bully; he had gained this inelegant, but truly appropriate appellation, from his reckless bearing, and from the circumstance of his eyes protruding to a frightful and unnatural extent.

"What, in the devil's name," said Horton, unable, at the moment, to govern his temper, "has kept you so long away?"

"What, in the devil's name," retorted the other, "caused you to send your bloodhounds on a wrong scent? But this is no place to talk of our affairs." Not waiting a reply, he lifted the trapdoor, and, followed by Horton, descended to their former place of conference.

"Did you not tell me, that in the letter you were to place mysteriously in your master's way, to alarm him for Osborne's safety, you would propose, as the best place to send the boy for security, would be to the house of his uncle at Woolwich, where we could easily secure him, and place him under hatches, aboard of our smuggling boat?"

"I did! and the boy is gone."

"And the boy has never been there," said the other, sneeringly.

"Not there! then where is he?" exclaimed Horton, with evident surprise.

"That's what I've come to ask of you," rejoined the other; and then went on in a more savage tone, "I hate half measures: if you bite, bite to the bone! I like not your mincing morsels. If he was to be put out of your way, why, put him out at once, say I. That cursed weaver had nearly escaped us—he, too, had been sent away to a place of security; but the Blear-eyed Bully was not to be tricked so easily—no, no, we traced him out, and——"

"You've murdered him!" exclaimed Horton, trembling.

"That's my business," rejoined the other: "what

I promise to do, I do. You undertook to look after Osborne—do it! for I wash my hands of him. Go into court with a bold face: all will go well if you but keep your word about Osborne. I shall be there to enjoy the joke; and a glorious joke it will be to hear the fools calling for their witnesses—ha, ha! nice witnesses they'll find. I never saw a dead man yet give evidence in a court of justice. Oh! it will be a glorious joke; but, remember, you may spoil all, unless you find Osborne."

"I have still one hope of doing so," said Horton. "If Dame Alyce knows where he is hid, her saintly father Brassinjaw shall get it from her, and then the secret's mine. Farewell, until we meet on the morning after to-morrow, in the court. Tell Miles, I've ordered a famous feast for him here, after his acquittal—farewell."

Although Horton assumed a bold air as they separated, he no sooner found himself alone in his own chamber, than he gave way to all his fears. "Man," he said, "is a fool, when he thinks he can direct his own fate. I fear I have fallen into the trap I myself had laid. I am certain Master Hewet had the letter I placed under the outward door, otherwise, why have sent Osborne hence; but if he took the warning, as from a friend, why not have carried out that unknown friend's advice in full? The Bully must have sought him in the wrong direction—my search shall prove more certain."

Old Walter Cromwell, the brewer, of Putney, had acquainted the youth with the true cause of his exile from the Bridge; and having nought to do but to amuse himself, he gave way entirely to his newly-born passion for the water.

Old Cromwell had taken a great fancy to young Osborne, and often did they stroll together into the country around. On the morning of the day he was to start for London, the old man and he were out together, when the former stopped before a very

humble cottage, lying west of the highway, leading from Putney to the upper gate. It was called the "Smith's shop;" above the door was the sign of the anchor, and within was heard the clinking of an anvil. The old man heaved a sigh, as he said—"Many is the happy hour I've passed in that old cottage; but then I was young, and to the young, everything seems happiness; and my boy Tom was happy, too, before he ran away into foreign parts, and became a soldier, and the Lord knows what. I doubt me whether he is happier now he is called the great Lord Cromwell, than when he was but poor honest Tom, the smith."

Edward started for his master's home, and when he reached the ferry at Battersea, he could not resist the temptation of a bath at the very spot where he had taken his first lesson in the art he now so much loved. He had scarcely prepared himself for the plunge, when violent screams and cries were heard from the opposite shore. He there saw a party of youths bathing, one of whom had apparently floated out of his depth, and was evidently struggling for his life. Edward dashed into the water, and reached the spot just as the poor boy sank. In an instant more, and Edward was also gone. Now the screaming and cries for help along the shore were redoubled; but all was changed to shouts of delight when they saw Osborne come to the surface, bringing with him the senseless form of the youth.

"Take him," he said, as he landed on the shore, "take him quickly to the hostelry, in the lane by the church, there you will get proper aid; fear nothing, he is not dead—his heart still beats."

The lads on the shore, who were evidently of the better order, were so bewildered, so confused, that they never thought of thanking Osborne for the noble action he had performed, but hurried away with their death-like burden, while he, jumping into the ferry-boat which had come to lend assistance, returned to the opposite side, where he had left his own boat and

his clothes. Having dressed himself, and feeling fatigued, he threw himself upon the grass, and in a few minutes, his senses were wrapped in a profound slumber.

When he awoke, he was astonished to find that the moon had already risen high in the heavens; so, getting quickly into the skiff, he launched her into the middle of the stream, and was once more on his solitary way.

"Come," said he, "I have not learnt to swim for nothing: he who saves a fellow-creature, has done that, which, though no more than his duty, may still make him feel an honest pride for the rest of his life." Onward he rowed, and he was fast approaching the Lambeth Marshes, whereon no house then stood—all here looked desolate. As he drew near the solitary tree which grew upon the point of land, at the bend of the river, he fancied he saw the forms of men as if struggling together, and dragging something towards the water's edge. The moon at this moment shone out so brightly that he could clearly discern four men—three of them forcing the fourth along, whose head and shoulders were entirely covered with some thick cloth, as if to prevent his cries from being heard; they dragged him into a boat and hastened to the centre of the river. Here the struggle appeared to be renewed, and the poor wretch, having for a moment freed his head, screamed out "murder," and frantically cried aloud for help. Osborne, forgetting at once the danger he might run, strained every nerve, and made his skiff fly through the water towards the murderers; just when he reached them he saw the tallest ruffian raise a large hammer, and dash it with all his might upon the head of their victim. The body they cast overboard, but as it fell, it nearly carried with it the murderer, for the poor wretch had seized, in the death struggle, so firmly upon the assassin, that had not his coat given way, they had both sunk together into eternity. They now furiously

attacked young Osborne—and in a moment his boat was turned keel upwards, and he was gone!

As the tide was running down rapidly, the murderers watched anxiously in the direction of the flood, and Blear-eyed Bully, for it was he who had just murdered the poor weaver, said, "Take this hammer, Bill, and if he comes to the surface again, use it as I did. He and the weaver may go together and give their evidence to the fishes—they'll tell no tales of us to-morrow, I'll swear." They looked around in every direction; not a ripple was on the bright face of the water; and feeling secure, the three wretches rowed on towards Old London Bridge.

CHAPTER IV.

SIR FILBUT FUSSY.

For as the lamb toward his death is brought,
So stands this innocent before the King:
This false knight, that hath this treason wrought,
Beareth her in hand, that she hath done this thing;
But natheless there was great murmuring
Among the people, and say they cannot guess
That she had done so great a wickedness.

CHAUCER.

ALL London soon became fully aware of the strange scene which had taken place during the tournament at Greenwich, and every house upon the eastern side of the old bridge, had its windows crowded with persons anxiously awaiting the return of those fatal barges, which seldom left the Tower but to revisit it, bearing some doomed victim of Henry's vengeance.

The powerful interest evinced by the worthy

citizens, arose principally from the exalted station of the victim, already doomed to be immolated on the altar of Henry's lust.

"It's not every day," as Catchemayde observed, "that we can see a Queen burnt alive, and I am told, if she's found guilty, she will be."

"I wish I was a King," said Checklocke, who was looking out of the same window of the Cardinal's Hat, "I wish I was a King; it must be so prime to get rid of one's wife, whenever one sees a gal one likes better. Wouldn't I have a bran new wife? ay—that I would, and that wife should be Flora Gray, dame Hewet's pretty maiden, who's now looking over the balcony yonder;" and then kissing his hand to her, called out, "a right good morrow, pretty one."

"Don't be a fool," said Catchemayde; "you'll have young Horton upon your back, for she says he's going to marry her."

"*She* says!—but what does *he* say? there are generally *two* words to a wedding, and though she may say yea, he may say nay. No, no, master Horton looks for something a little *above* her."

Whether or not Checklocke meant his last words to carry a double meaning we cannot say, but certainly they might be so construed, for at that instant, Harry Horton, who was with Flora Gray in the lower balcony of the merchant's house, was casting an anxious glance to the one above, over the front of which was leaning, the lovely Alyce, her husband, and a young man magnificently attired. This young spark was an "exquisite," of the sixteenth century. Rings of precious stones adorned his fingers; and in his left hand he bore a silver scenter, or bottle highly chased, containing the most valued perfumes from Arabia. In his case, as in that of some we could point out of our own day, the "*dandy*" was permitted by nature to be the twin of genius. He was a poet!

Our dandy poet was called Sir Filbut Fussy. He

was very youthful, very handsome, very good natured, and very rich ; and a youth possessing all these advantages, and a turn for poetry and music, was calculated to become a great favourite with the generality of the fair sex, and a great favourite Sir Filbut Fussy was.

Sir Filbut Fussy, who had travelled much, was entertaining the merchant's lovely wife with a description of an Italian meal, and raised her wonder, and a slight feeling of disgust, at the affectation of these Italians, who she now learnt actually ate their dinners with a *fork*, instead of their fingers.

"Yes," said Sir Filbut, "I can assure you such is the fact ; and I do hope to see the day when Italian forks, instead of alabaster fingers, will be employed by all my fair countrywomen, to raise the luscious morsel from their platters, to their heavenly lips."

"You really make me laugh, Sir Filbut," said Alyce ; "only picture to yourself, husband, a whole party of us seated round the board using such childish toys. Did *you* ever use one, Sir Filbut ?"

"I always do," was his reply, and he produced a small velvet casket, whence he took a very diminutive fork, made of Milan steel. "I believe," he said, "I am the first who ever used a fork in England."

"And I hope you will be the last," said Hewet ; "we have already too many foreign fancies brought here."

"I wonder," observed fair Alyce, "our queen, who, when plain Anne Boleyn, was so much in foreign lands, has never yet rendered this affectation of the fork fashionable."

"That is easily accounted for," replied Sir Filbut ; "the using of a fork would too much expose the sixth finger on her left hand ; and we know her deformities are subjects she likes to keep concealed—witness the collar-band she wears about her neck, to hide the strawberry growing there."

"If all the reports be true," observed the merchant, "it will grow there but little longer ; yet I cannot bring

my mind to credit half the vile tales now circulating through the town, such wholesale depravity they accuse her with! Why, even her own brother is already a prisoner in the Tower; and Alyce's poor music-master, Smeaton, too, he little thought, poor fellow, how dangerous a post his talents had raised him to."

"But still," said Alyce, "so good and great a king as is Henry would never act like this without some fair cause for doing so."

"You are right," said Sir Filbut, "quite right; it is a fair, a right fair cause, and that *fair* cause is fair Jane Seymour."

"Why, Jane Seymour is one of the queen's own maids of honour," observed Hewet.

"And was not Anne Boleyn one of Queen Catherine's own maids of honour?" replied Sir Filbut; "if she supplanted good Queen Catherine, she pointed out the way for others to supplant herself; she lacketh wisdom, or she never would have had so fair a maid as Jane within the reach of one so quickly touched by beauty as is her own dear lord. He always had a *penchant* for pretty maids of honour."

Great crowds of boats now appeared in the distance, and then began loud shouts, and yells, and hootings, which continued until the barge containing Anne Boleyn, her uncle the Duke of Norfolk, her deadly foe the Duke of Suffolk, Cromwell, and others of the Council, reached the water-gate of the Tower.

The moment the boats had appeared in sight, Sir Filbut Fussy took his leave, saying he would just go round to the Tower, see the queen land, and having collected all the news he could, he would return at their evening meal to relate what he should have learnt, and give Alyce a lesson in the use of the Italian fork, and, if he might be allowed so great a happiness (here he slightly sighed), present her with one he had at his lodging, made of Venetian gold.

As Sir Filbut descended the dark stairs, he met

Harry Horton, who, whispering, said, "How speeds your cause, good sir?"

"But indifferently well," the other answered: "that dolt, her husband, never left us for a moment."

"But, good Sir Filbut," said Horton, "have you thought further about the diamond you spoke of? There's nothing wins a woman half so soon as diamonds."

"I'faith, I have, and here it is; take it, good Horton, but, prithee, be careful of it, for it is a costly gem, and worth a dozen other women; but Alyce, pretty Alyce, is worth a dozen gems like that."

"And the purse for Flora?" said Horton. "I wish, to my very heart, we could have done without her; but, as she was determined to use her eyes, I thought it best to fasten a golden chain about her tongue; at all events, I've kept her quiet."

"You are, indeed, a friend," observed Sir Filbut, taking Horton's hand; "but how do you propose to give sweet Alyce the diamond bauble, so as not to raise suspicion?"

"Leave that to me," was Horton's reply. "If once you see her wear it on her neck, you'll know it has been received right kindly. But pray be cautious, Sir Filbut, and remember, it is gratitude alone that makes me act the part I do: you have ever bound me to your service, by aiding to save me from the fangs of that vile Jew. Alas! alas! that I should have ever been so weak; perhaps, with years, I may become as wise as you, Sir Filbut, and escape the snares so often laid for youth. I know not how to ask it—but—no, you have done too much already for my service—and yet, if he should take me for that debt, who then could be your friend in this affair? I fear, for your sake, I must speak out—yes—yes, I must—"

"You alarm me!" said Sir Filbut. "Speak quickly, then, be whate'er it may."

"He swears he'll have *me*, or another hundred marks."

"Is that all!" replied Sir Filbut, breathing more freely—"the money's yours."

"Too generous man!" replied Horton, with a voice almost stifled by overflowing gratitude, as he received this second purse; "but remember, it is but a loan. I keep a strict account, I can assure you, sir,—this makes the fifth hundred I have had."

"And you shall have five hundred more, if Alyce will but fly with me to Italy."

"Hush, hush! walls they say have ears. I have fortunately got rid of my prying brother apprentice, and all for your good service. Hark, I hear a foot-step; farewell, and may good fortune smile upon so generous a friend."

"Any one would think, my dear," said the merchant to his fair dame, "you were half in love with Sir Filbut. I see but little in his poetry, that you extol so highly, and much less in himself to be admired."

"He must see enough in you to admire, William," Alyce replied; "for he is ever seeking your society."

"Any man who has a pretty wife, my dear, is seldom without some dozen butterfly attendants, fluttering about the sweet flower he has gathered to adorn his own breast with. Although I will not pay myself so ill a compliment, nor offer such an insult to my wife, as to be fearful of Sir Filbut, yet I had rather he stayed away a little more, or gazed at you a little less."

"Now you are jealous, my dearest husband, I am sure you are; and I am not sorry that you be; for it proves that Alyce is, in your dear eyes, still worth the guarding. Only be kind and true yourself, dear husband, and then you need fear nor sir, nor lord, nor duke!"

How much longer this dove-like *tête-à-tête* would have continued, Cupid alone can tell, but it was now put a stop to by the renewed shoutings and hootings which ascended from those upon the river. The barges stopped at the Tower, and it was at this

moment, as history informs us, that the doomed Anne Boleyn fell upon her knees in the barge, exclaiming, "Oh, Lord, help me, as I am guiltless of that whereof I am accused!"

The queen being safely lodged in the Tower, the crowds began to disperse, the inhabitants of the Bridge resumed their usual occupations, and all the stream of life seemed to be again flowing on, as if no strange event had just occurred, or that there were no forebodings of troubles soon to come, worth one serious thought.

Being anxious to explain several circumstances which happened soon after the dreadful murder of the weaver, and the loss of Edward Osborne, we shall touch but lightly upon the promised return of Sir Filbut Fussy at the good merchant's evening meal; yet we must not omit to mention that, be the cause what it might, whether it were done to charm her husband, or flatter Sir Filbut Fussy, or only arose from female anxiety ever to be admired, it is certain that Alyce Hewet, on the evening in question, had bestowed more than common pains upon her personal attire.

When Sir Filbut Fussy did arrive, he had nearly swooned with delight on perceiving his splendid diamond adorning the fair neck of Alyce. So overpowering was its effect upon his nervous temperament, that now, instead of wishing, as was his wont, to be doing something else, he now wanted to be doing everything at once. He soon delivered himself of the information he had gathered at the Tower, of how Anne Boleyn (for he said—"Already she ceases to be called the queen") was not to go into a dungeon, but was to be a prisoner in the same apartment she slept in the night before her coronation; that her two greatest enemies, her own relation, Lady Boleyn, and Mistress Cosyns, were to hold her under the most insulting *espionage*; that, although her five accomplices were not yet tried, and by most considered

innocent, it was still perfectly understood that Smeaton, the musician, would first be racked, then hanged—the others beheaded. “The only doubt,” he said, “lay in the fate of Anne Boleyn; but about her there was certainly a doubt.”

“Then the poor soul,” said Alyce, with all a woman’s pity for her sex in sorrow, “she may yet be saved?”

“Saved!” replied Sir Filbut, slightly smiling at so preposterous a thought. “Saved! oh, no! the only doubt is whether she be sent to the block or to the flames; I should say the latter: much will depend on what Jane Seymour wishes. ‘A little longer, and Nan’s a little shorter,’ I heard a smith facetiously observe, as I came by, and, perhaps, the smith was right: but what matter is it to us—a burning, or decapitation, will each alike be cause of holiday,” so say the people.”

A gentleman of Sir Filbut Fussy’s rank being present, the table for the evening meal was laid out with holiday attention. Not a wooden platter was to be seen, as on common days: all were polished pewter. The little golden fork was not forgotten; and Harry Horton, being the youngest there, having, as was his duty, carved the meat for his mistress in her platter, she almost choked herself with laughing at her own absurd attempt to use it as elegantly as did Sir Filbut. She accepted, however, of the golden fork, for she regarded it as a great curiosity; and she asked her husband, if he did not think it might be employed, very becomingly, as an ornament for the hair? After the surnap, or small upper tablecloth, had been removed with the dishes, and a few of the scanty supply of fruits then to be obtained having been placed upon the table, accompanied by some flasks of those delicious sweet wines, Malmsey and Romney sacks, which then cost a shilling a gallon, the child—the lovely little Anne, was brought into the chamber.

Sir Filbut Fussy, who knew that next to being herself admired, a lady generally feels pleasure in hearing

her offspring praised, threw himself into perfect raptures with the "little angel." As there was no doubt about the beauty of Anne, Sir Filbut declared he never beheld two countenances so exactly alike as those of Dame Alyce and her child; he scanned and compared every feature, one by one; but when he came to the comparison of the eyes, Sir Filbut Fussy looked so languishingly into those of Alyce, and put on such a ridiculous expression of annihilating tenderness, that the good dame could no longer resist a smile, and feeling confused, she turned away, and proposed that they should have a little music.

"Ay, do, sweet one," said the merchant kindly to his wife, "and then I think Sir Filbut will in truth wish you had not got a husband."

Sir Filbut did, but this he kept to himself; and honest Master Hewet went on—"Yes, Sir Filbut, when you have heard her, I am sure you will confess there is not in London town a prettier toucher of the virginals than Alyce Hewet."

Sir Filbut ventured to say—he did not think there could be a *prettier* anything in the whole world than Alyce Hewet; saying which he made a profound bow to the lady, who, smiling, seated herself at the virginals, a sort of spinet, from which our modern pianoforte is derived.

Sir Filbut seized upon a theorbo; the merchant, without being asked to do so, at once began to tune his rebeck, or three-stringed fiddle; Harry Horton took up a flute; and Flora Gray, who was really a very pretty singer, was desired to be the leader of the vocals.

Grand was the crash, as the reader may suppose, when so many fine performers struck up together. What did it matter to them whether they came in at the right place or not? Sir Filbut and Flora Gray felt that *they* were in the right place, so that was a good way towards things going on smoothly. The poor husband, as usual, came in for a sharpish reprimand.

mand, for when all else had left off, he kept on playing by himself for at least a dozen bars. This he accounted for by having turned over two leaves instead of one, so that he had all through been fiddling the accompaniment of a perfectly different piece of music, and in a different key too.

As a punishment, his wife desired him to sing a song, forgetting at the moment that the punishment would be theirs, not his—for Master Hewet never sang but one song in his life, and that was "Simon Frisell," a very ancient ballad, even three hundred years ago. As our gentle readers might like to know what was really pure English in those days, we will insert *one* verse of Master Hewet's ten verse infliction; thus it ran:—

He rideth thourth the site as J tell may,
 With gomen and with solas that wos here play.
 To londone brugge hee nome the way;
 Moni was wyues the chil' that ther on leketh a day,
 And seide, alas!
 That he was ibere—and so villiche forlore
 So feir mon as he wos!
 Now stout the heued above the tubrugge,
 Fast bi Waleis soth for to sugge.

The sound is certainly pleasing to modern ears, but means neither more nor less, than that—he rides through the city, amidst the rejoicings of his enemies, and that his head stands on the town bridge, close by that of William Wallace. The heads of Sir William Wallace and of Sir Simon Frisell, or Fraser, are supposed to have been the first ever placed above the Traitor's Gate, on Old London Bridge.

After this the pretty Flora sang a ballad, every verse ending with something about "Naughty Harry of the Hill."

Then Sir Filbut sang a song of his own authorship and his own composition, but this was of a rather better order, for, with all his vanity and folly, Sir Filbut Fussy possessed many of the attributes of a

real poet, and of the genius of a musician : every word he sang was of love, and every line he sang with pointed emphasis towards the beautiful Alyce.

The entertainments of this charming evening were wound up by a sort of round or chorus, each singing a verse, and the symphony was taken up by all the instruments, somewhat after the fashion of the modern Ethiopian serenaders.

The words have been old for some hundreds of years, and in those days were universally admired, therefore there was no difficulty in each person present taking a verse. Like all really old English ballads, it was of an almost interminable length ; but we shall only insert a few verses.

The first verse was chanted by little Anne, and began—

London Bridge is broken down,
Dance o'er my Lady Lea ;
London Bridge is broken down,
With a gay La-dee.

"Then she must have been uncommonly heavy," observed Master Hewet, who was beginning to get a little tired of the concert, and was about to state so, when Horton joined in, laying a strong emphasis upon the word "*we*," as he looked at Sir Filbut :—

Then *we* must set a man to watch,
Dance o'er my Lady Lea ;
Then *we* must set a man to watch,
With a gay La-dee.

Suppose the man should fall asleep ? (Sang Alyce)
Dance o'er my Lady Lea ;
Suppose the man should fall asleep,
With a gay La-dee ?

Here Hewet gave a very loud snore, which proved that although not "*with a gay La-dee*," the man *had* fallen fast asleep. At this Flora sang, at the very top of her voice—

Suppose the *dog* should *run away*?
Dance o'er my Lady Lea;
Suppose the *dog* should *run away*,
With a gay La-dee?

"What's that—what's that!" exclaimed Hewet, waking up with a start; and then, like a man who is suddenly called from his sleep to fulfil some important duty, he hurriedly bawled out—

Then we must chain him to a post,
Dance o'er my Lady Lea;
Then we must chain him to a post,
With a gay La-dee.

"And, damn 'em—thrash 'em both within an inch of their lives!" We beg to apologize for swearing, but it was a very common habit in the sixteenth century. Even Queen Elizabeth was not exempt from that vice of the day, so we hope, as faithful chroniclers, to be pardoned

"Good heavens!" exclaimed Alyce, "what ails you?" She was really alarmed, for Master Hewet still stood in the centre of the room quite bewildered.

"A thousand pardons, my dear Alyce," at last he said; "but I must have been dreaming; I've had such horrid visions flying through my brain, and mixing themselves up with that silly song. I'm afraid I've made myself more silly than the song itself."

The party now broke up, and each went their way.

Sir Filbut, as may be supposed, was in ecstasy at the progress he was sure he had made in the good graces of that queen of every grace, fair Alyce Hewet.

"Could any man on earth," he said, as he strolled homewards, "having so few opportunities of making himself agreeable to the fair, as he hitherto had had with Alyce, have done so much, in so little time, as he? No!" he exclaimed, proudly, as if there could be any cause for pride in succeeding in any act of villany. "She has kept my diamond—how beautiful it looked on her fair neck! She has kept my lute—

how lovely it will sound beneath her fair hand ! And she has kept my golden fork too."

As he passed beneath the Traitor's Gate he started ; for a voice, as if issuing from the very stones of the wall, sang pointedly, but oh ! so sweetly—

Then *we* must set a man to watch,
Dance o'er my Lady Lea ;
Then *we* must set a man to watch
With a gay La-dec.

"Ha, ha ! oh, oh ! he, he——!" screeched out the Cripple of the Bridge-gate Tower, for it was he who had thrust his misshapen head out through a little window in the wall, close to Sir Filbut's ear, and had thus startled him.

"Why, Willy," said Sir Filbut, "you are like a ghost ; at every turn you haunt one. Why are you not up amongst your darling traitors ?"

"Because," replied the other, "I have a spike to spare, and came down to look for one darling traitor more."

"And have you found one?" asked Sir Filbut, laughing.

"Perhaps you can tell me," was the Cripple's reply,

"If you mean me, certainly not. I'm too loyal ever to war against my king."

"Oh ! there are other traitors," replied the Cripple, "than those who compass a king's death ; for instance, he who secretly wars against a man's good name—he is a traitor ; and he who wars against a maid's good fame—he is a traitor ; and——"

"Enough, good Cripple, say no more ; you're far too quick for me to argue with. But I marvel not at your wisdom, seeing how many wise heads you always have at your command."

"Mind I do not place a fool's amongst them, by way of variety," said the Cripple, as he slammed to the casement.

Sir Filbut could not help laughing at the Cripple's

retort, and having called out to him a loud "good night," continued his way towards his home. The Cripple was heard repeating the verse he had just sung, but now he altered the last line; for he said—

We must set a man to watch,
Dance o'er my Lady Lea;
We must set a man to watch
For this poor La-dee.

CHAPTER V.

THE TRIAL.

I will myself with you ride,
Right at mine own cost, and be your guide.

CHAUCER.

THE reader will doubtless remember that at the close of the third chapter we described the manner in which the Blear-eyed Bully, with his two assistant murderers, had disposed of the unfortunate weaver and Edward Osborne. This happened in the night preceding the day on which the robber Miles was to be tried for his life. During the whole of that evening Master Hewet had felt so much anxiety concerning the non-appearance of Edward, that he could no longer resist telling his wife and Harry Horton the course he had pursued to ensure the safety of his apprentice. "Alas!" he said, "I fear I have fallen into a deep-laid snare, and have perchance become the innocent cause of some dreadful misfortune to the youth. Why was I in such haste to follow the advice of any anonymous informer? I believe that both the letters—"

"Both the letters!" exclaimed Horton, taken off his guard.

"Yes, two letters reached me; but I have every reason to believe that the second was forwarded merely to raise my confidence in the advice offered in the first; for in that I was told another would be

placed within my reach, and so there was, and exactly in the manner described."

Horton was taken completely aback. Could the Blear-eyed Bully have betrayed him? But why should he? He was the only one to whom Horton had divulged his scheme; but, then, the Bully's safety was as much at stake as his own.

Dame Alyce, to whom all this seemed like a romance, became greatly interested, and asked her husband a thousand questions, while Horton listened anxiously to every word the merchant uttered in answer to Alyce's inquiries, hoping therefrom to find some clue to the mystery.

It appeared, that not an hour after the dead of night, the merchant was disturbed by a strange noise at the window of the room next to his dormitory, looking on to the Bridge; indeed, it was the same casement at which they had stood the day before to witness the procession of the Maypole. As this noise continued, the merchant at last arose to learn the cause; and on looking out, he saw a boy beneath, who, the moment the casement opened, raised on the end of a long willow wand a letter, which the merchant having taken, the boy ran swiftly towards the city. So truthfully was this letter written, that Master Hewet acted upon its advice immediately, and sent off Edward in the manner the reader is already aware of. The merchant, on descending in the morning, found Horton's letter forced under the outer door; he had placed it there only a few minutes after Osborne had departed. The merchant said, that although the finding the second letter confirmed, in some degree, the truth of the first, yet it had perplexed him much, for it proposed a place of safety directly opposite to that in which he had placed Edward. "But," he continued, "whatever misfortune, if any has happened, must have occurred this day; for he was safe with my old friend at Putney as late as yesterday; this I know."

"And is safe, yet, you may depend," said Alyce. "He knows full well the hour he will be wanted, and, no doubt, will be at Westminster to-morrow, by the time you reach the court." And so saying, Alyce took up the lamp, and left the room, followed by her husband.

Horton went to his chamber, but it was useless to attempt to sleep: he was bewildered quite, and so anxious and restless did he feel, he determined to visit the "Cardinal's Hat," thinking it might, by some chance, so happen that his murderous friend the Bully might be there upon other affairs.

We have already stated, that after the murder, the three wretches took their way towards the Bridge, so that, by mere accident, it did turn out exactly as Horton had hoped; for, soon after he had entered, these blood-stained worthies also came in.

Horton was upon the point of telling the Bully all he had that night learnt; but was silenced, and made almost to sink with fear, as the Blear-eyed Bully whispered in his ear the horrors they had just committed—"Here, milksop!" he said, pushing a jug of hot liquor towards Horton, who had turned deadly pale, "take some of this spirit, for you have but little of your own, and then go home to bed—that's the best place for boys; sleep off your fears, and, in the morning, when we meet in the court, look well at *me*, and learn the proper bearing of a man."

We will not attempt to follow the workings of Horton's mind during the dark hours of that night. At every turn he fancied he saw the weaver and Osborne bleeding at his bedside; and waking, found himself continually crying out, that it was not he who had murdered them. The moment it was light he arose, and bathing his head and face again and again in cold water, he tried to shake off his fears, and to a degree succeeded. He felt, that although the crime had been committed, no one could accuse him; and now, both the witnesses against Miles being gone, the

robber would doubtless put on a more courageous bearing, and keep his tongue between his teeth.

When the time for departure of the merchant, and those who were to attend the court had arrived, Sir Filbut Fussy made his appearance. He was mounted on a beautiful horse, and followed by a number of others, led by his men, bearing upon their left arms his badge of servitude. Alyce having expressed a wish to hear the trial, it had been settled, at the earnest solicitation of Sir Filbut, that the whole party should go by land, instead of by water, as was the usual method, and that he should be allowed the honour of supplying the horses from his own stables. Another reason Sir Filbut offered for proposing this arrangement, was, his desire to have the advice of the merchant, regarding an open plot of ground lying in the Strand, which he had a wish to purchase for the purpose of erecting a mansion upon it.—“This they could,” he said, “examine on their way to Westminster; and he should, by the present arrangement, have the advantage of consulting the exquisite taste of the merchant’s wife.”

A splendid charger had been provided for Master Hewet, with a pillion behind for the accommodation of his fair spouse. A mule was placed at the disposal of Horton, and another, upon which was a kind of double leathern chair, very like those used in the present day for children, when they ride in pairs upon donkeys in the park—this was for the use of Flora Gray and the little Anne, for Dame Hewet seldom took pleasure away from home, when she could not be accompanied by her handmaiden and her darling child. After all were mounted, and ready to start, two running footmen took the lead, two more, one on each side the head of the horse, which bore the merchant and his wife, attended by Sir Filbut Fussy, then came Flora with the little Anne, and at her side, Harry Horton. The rear was brought up by several mounted serving-men, all in the livery of Sir Filbut Fussy.

Just before quitting the Bridge, when in one of the narrowest parts, the merchant's horse, from some cause or other, shied, and had nearly done great harm to a passer-by, who, striking the horse across the head with his staff, exclaimed—"Curses on yo, upstarts! What, oh! brother Hewet, is it thou? Ha, ha! ho, ho! he, he——! But I shall boil your head yet! I shall boil your head yet!"

"Out of the way, Cripple!" said Horton, savagely striking him with a heavy whip, which the Cripple parried with his staff, and merely uttering a contemptuous "Pish!" hobbled on towards the Bridge-gate Tower, humming as he went—

We must set a man to watch,
Dance o'er my Lady Lea—
We must set a man to watch
For this poor La-dee.

Leaving the Bridge, they turned to the left, and passed along Thames Street. By-and-by they turned up Paul's Chain, into Paul's Church Yard, descended Ludgate Hill, then called Fleete Hyll; passed over Fleete Bridge, for, at the time we speak of, the River Thames received a smaller river, where Blackfriars Bridge now stands, called the River of Fleete: it was broad and deep, and was of great use for merchant-vessels. This river afterwards bore the less ostentatious appellation of Fleet Ditch. Many years elapsed, and it was covered in, and now what remains of it is hid beneath Bridge Street, and that magnificent opening, Farringdon Street, at the extremity of which formerly stood another bridge, crossing the same River of Fleete, called Oldbourne, or Holborn Bridge.

A little beyond Temple Bar, the noble horse upon which the merchant rode, and which had previously, more than once, shown a restive disposition, became almost unmanageable, and Alyce was so alarmed, that she dared not, she said, remain upon so fiery a steed; but Sir Filbut Fussy declared, that this horse was the

one he always rode, and was mildness itself when he was upon its back ; as a proof of the soothness of his words, he begged the merchant to alight, and change horses. This the merchant did, and Sir Filbut, having placed himself before the lovely Alyce, and having begged of her to hold fast by him, and fear nothing, made the animal go through his various paces with all the docility of a lamb. Sir Filbut's spirits now rose to an amazing height, for he had, at last, brought about what he had expected long before ; but he had miscalculated the good horsemanship of our city merchant. The truth was, that Sir Filbut's charger was so well schooled to the peculiar manage of his master, that, hitherto, few had ever been able to keep their seats but himself ; and it had annoyed him terribly, to find that Hewet knew so well the temper of a horse, as to be able, thus long, to keep him in control.

They reached the Strand, at that time a very ill-formed road, for it was but three years before that the real line of way could be said to have been fairly marked out.

The whole of the north side of the Strand, at this time, was open country, and it was here that Sir Filbut pointed out a spot of ground, not far from where the Adelphi Theatre now stands, as the site of the new mansion. He said—" I shall build a tower high enough to overlook all the fields yonder ; the Convent Garden (now Covent Garden Market), the little village of St. Giles, and, indeed, far beyond." The merchant pronounced it to be an admirably-formed conceit ; and Alyce admired the locality as being " so superbly open."

The party soon after arrived at the court of justice. Sir Fulbut Fussy, with Alyce and her maiden, obtained accommodation in the gallery above, while Hewet and Horton hurried about, in vain endeavour to find Edward Osborne and the other witness, Wallace the weaver. Horton was not yet so inured

to crime, as to be able to hear, with composure, even the names of those whose dreadful fates he knew full well. Horton had another reason for his present seeming activity in his master's cause, and that was, the hope of learning from the Bully, if possible, how Miles was likely to act, now there was every chance, nay, certainty, of his acquittal.

The merchant had proposed to his man of law to throw up the case, and let Miles be discharged at once ; but the man of law, having prepared a most eloquent speech, not feeling inclined that the world should lose so great a treasure, insisted upon going on at all events, until they had to call their witnesses—"For," as he said, "it is not impossible that both Osborne, as well as Wallace, may yet arrive." Every time he came to the words, "which we shall be able to prove by our witnesses," Horton saw a sneer of contempt and triumph pass across the features of the Bully. At last, the counsel sat down ; and the crier called upon Edward Osborne to come into court ; but no Edward Osborne answered ; this having been done three times the opposing counsel was heard to say, in an undertone of voice, but quite loud enough to reach every ear—"Exactly what I expected, exactly what I expected." Then came great nodding of heads together, and smiles, and a whispered witticism or two at the expense of brother Whistlepipe, Master Hewet's leading counsel. Then the crier called three times upon the next witness, Wallace, the weaver, to appear, but with no better result than in the case of Osborne. Upon this second failure, up started Sergeant Thunderdown, brimful of that virtuous indignation which counsel can at all times call up from the very bottom of their too sensitive hearts. He said—"The insult to the Court was almost too great to be borne, and were it not for the respect he felt for the learned judge before him, he should be tempted to tell his learned brother, Whistlepipe—but, no, no ; he would, for this time, swallow the gall of his indignation, and

stifle in its birth the child of his resentment. Besides," he said, "there was another reason for his determination to say but little, and that was, his wish to ease the feelings of that poor innocent creature there," (here he pointed to the prisoner, who really appeared to be the very impersonation of villany), "look at his face—there you will see the very index of a book of innocence, that a babe might read with advantage." He appealed to the judge, he appealed to the jury, he appealed to all who heard him—had there ever been such a trumpery, such a contemptible, such an insulting case, as the one now brought before them? Here was a poor, worthy, hard-working, honest, religious creature, accused of robbery, kept in prison for weeks and months—he was going to say years, for every week in prison, to the innocent, is as a year—he is to be tried for his life, and when it comes to the proof, the witnesses dare not look innocence in the face, and therefore abscond—yes, abscond! Now, although his injured client must of necessity be acquitted, yet, to show the world how worthy a man had been placed in that dreadful position, he would call one, only one, although he had a hundred witnesses ready to speak to character. He called Captain Bully.

Horton rose up actually with astonishment when he saw the Blear-eyed Bully most unconcernedly take his place in the witness-box. Had but one hundredth part of what *Captain Bully* said been true, there was not a virtue of man, woman, or child, that Miles did not possess. The Bully became so warmed by his subject, so enthusiastic in his eulogiums, so eloquent in his praises, that Miles actually blushed at hearing himself thus painted in all the colours of the purest virtue, religion, equity, and honour! There is scarcely any knowing how long the Bully would have continued had not he been stopped suddenly, just as he was calling upon heaven to send, if such an one could be found, a single human being, who would dare to accuse his innocent friend. He had just finished this sentence,

when a cry was raised by those without, of "He's here! he's here!" and in another moment, a party of Hewet's workmen hurried in, bringing with them Edward Osborne.

Had a ghost really appeared, the effect could have been but little greater upon the prisoner and the witness. Miles became deadly pale, and had nearly fallen to the ground; the Blear-eyed Bully stood aghast, but being a man of iron nerves, he recovered his self-possession, and immediately attempted unseen to leave the court.

"Remain!" exclaimed the Judge, who had observed the intention of the Bully. The crowd that stood around the witness-box forced him back again. He in a loud voice addressed the Judge, saying—"My lord, why am I detained? I have given my evidence. I am a witness, not a prisoner!"

"Oh, God! that voice!" exclaimed Edward, who, turning, saw the Bully; "that form—it is—it is the murderer!"

Edward was called upon to explain his meaning, and listened to with breathless attention, as he related all that he had witnessed the night before. As he proceeded in his narrative, a shudder ran through the court, as he described the death-struggle of the victim with his murderer; every eye was fixed on the Blear-eyed-Bully, as Edward pointing to him, exclaimed, "and as God shall prove my words, that man is the murderer!"

There was little doubt now, that if what Osborne had stated were true, the murdered man was the unfortunate weaver. The Bully was placed in the dock with Miles, and called upon to answer the accusation against him.

As he took his place by Miles, he looked down upon him with a sneer of contempt, for Miles was almost sinking from intense agitation. Harry Horton was scarcely less alarmed, and kept his eyes rivetted imploringly upon the Bully, who said in a deep under

tone, "I am no blab!" Horton felt his meaning, and for a moment breathed more freely.

"See, see," said Osborne, again pointing to the accused, "I had forgotten to say, that as the body, to the feet of which a huge stone was tied, fell heavily from the boat, the murdered victim had seized so tightly upon his assassin, that in sinking down, he bore with him a portion of the murderer's coat, to which he had clung; and see, the jerkin of that man is rent, and part is torn away."

"Ha, ha, a pretty witness this to swear a man's life away!" exclaimed the bully, "who first examines a poor devil's clothes, and because they are not so prim and new as his own, turns one's poverty to account, and——"

Here he was interrupted by Miles, who no longer able to bear his mental suffering, cried out,—"Mercy, mercy! only save my life, and I will tell all——"

"Silence!" roared out the Blear-eyed Bully. At the same time, Harry Horton rose, knowing not what he did.

"I will not be silent!" said the other; "only promise me my life—and I will tell all: there are more here who know——"

"Silence, hell-dog!" exclaimed the Bully, foaming with rage.

"I will speak, I will speak——"

"Then damn you!" he cried, in a voice of thunder; and with a giant's power gave the poor wretch such a deadly blow upon the temple with his clenched fist, that the blood flew about in all directions, and Miles lay dead at his feet.

But this was not yet the climax of the horrid scene; shouts of execration were heard, the large doors opposite to where the prisoner stood suddenly flew open, and there was seen a crowd, headed by the Bridge-shooter, bearing in the dead body of the murdered weaver, in whose hand was still clenched the damning evidence against his assassin. The Blear-

eyed Bully's whole face swelled up until scarcely a feature could be distinguished; his eyes seemed bursting from their sockets; the women screamed; Alyce fainted; and the whole court became a scene of fright, bewilderment, confusion and of horror.

CHAPTER VI.

THE EXECUTION AT BILLINGSGATE.

Say forth thy tale, and tarry not the time.

CHAUCER.

ALYCE being too indisposed to ride home, Sir Filbut Fussy flew to the Palace Stairs, and hired one of the most commodious barges there; in this she was placed, and sat reclining between her husband and Sir Filbut: on one side of the boat was Flora Gray, on the other little Anne, with her favourite, Edward Osborne, and in the centre, but at a respectable distance, Billy-the-bridge-shooter was seated on the floor, for Edward had already acquainted the good merchant with quite enough of the late strange occurrences to raise his curiosity, and create a desire to know more. They had searched in vain for Harry Horton—he had left the court unseen, immediately after the murderer had been committed. They felt no alarm on his account, for just as the merchant was placing his foot upon the barge, an ill-looking fellow handed him a letter; this was from Horton, excusing his absence, under the plea of having been sent for, to attend, what, he said, he feared would prove the death-bed of his father.

As may be supposed, they had scarcely been seated before the wonderful scene they had just left became the all-absorbing topic of conversation, and Edward explained those parts in which he was concerned, and which he had omitted when in court, as being useless at that time.

"But to what miracle," said the merchant, "did you owe the preservation of your own life?"

"To that miracle!" replied Edward, pointing and looking kindly at Billy-the-bridge-shooter; "it is to him I owe my life, through God's help, and to him alone!" he seized the lad's hand and shook it heartily; "would that I knew how to thank him enough!"

"Kiss him," said the child; "that's the way you always thank me when I please you."

"But perhaps, Anne," said the merchant, smiling at the child's innocence, "but perhaps he would prefer being thanked by some fine lady—will Flora, perchance—"

"Indeed, master, but Flora won't," said the maid, tossing up her nose.

"Then I will," and throwing her arms round the lad's neck, the child kissed the Bridge-shooter, whose face became scarlet with confusion. "Thank'ye, my lady," said he, "but vot I a' done for him an't worth half of that—it an't indeed, my lady! he was kind to my poor old mother, you sees, my lady; and I teached him to swim—I only teached him to swim—that's all—and I hope my lord and my lady, and you, honord sir, I an't done no harm; if I has, I humbly craves your pardon." Having said this he looked all manner of ways, he felt so terribly ashamed. Edward, to relieve him of his embarrassment, drew all the attention towards himself, by explaining how he had been enabled to baffle the murderous intention of his assailants the night before. Fortunately for him-elf, his presence of mind never for a moment forsook him. The moment he was precipitated into the water, he felt that were he again to be seen by those wretches, his death was certain, so calculating, that as the stream was running swiftly down, they would naturally first watch in that direction, in order to complete his destruction should he again appear, he, whilst under the water, laboured to swim for a time against the stream, and remembering that he had seen a single

barge at some distance off, he turned his course, as well as he could guess, in that direction; fortune befriended him, for when compelled again to come to the surface to take breath, he perceived himself to be just on the further side of it; this for a time screened him from their view, but fancying they were turning their boat to that point, he once again dived under, and coming up as seldom as his now-failing strength would permit, he at last gained the shore. So completely worn out was he, that he found it impossible to rise from the ground upon which he now lay. The night had become bitter cold—his senses were gradually leaving him—strange fancies flitted through his brain—he felt that he was dying—when, just as his eyes were closing, and he had given up all hopes of life, he felt a hand placed upon his shoulder. The sudden thought that the murderers had seized him, gave him for a moment the strength of despair; he turned, when over him he saw, by the moon's light, the kneeling figure of an aged woman. "Come," she said, "come, I am sent to fetch you. Ha, ha! my son will own I'm a witch now, I'm thinking: were I not a witch, how had I known you were here. Whoever you may be rise and follow me; but first take this—it is a magic draught that always give me strength." She placed to his lips an antique wooden bottle, curiously carved; the spirit it contained acted powerfully upon his frame, it glowed like fire through his veins. The old woman again urged him to follow her; he made another effort to rise, which, by her aid, proved successful. In a few minutes they reached a hut of the humblest kind; it stood alone in the midst of the marshes near Lambeth, then a bleak and desolate spot; but his heart was cheered by the sight of a blazing fire, and his wonder raised to the highest pitch, for there by its welcome light he saw the Bridge-shooter comfortably seated.

"But I was more astonished nor him," said the lad, "to see Master Edward walk in with my old mother.

But don't believe, good gentlefolks, that she is a vitch—she isn't—indeed she isn't; although she does at times make vun doubt vun's seven senses."

Edward soon concluded his narrative, by stating that, completely overcome with fatigue, horror, and anxiety, it was useless to attempt reaching the merchant's that night, and it was late in the morning before a boat could be procured. The Bridge-shooter had not accompanied him, for he said he had a little secret business of his own to perform that morning, but hurried Edward away straight to the Court. Of all that subsequently happened there, the reader is fully aware. Alyce and Flora had been so interested in Edward as he told his tale of wonder, that they began to regard him with a very different feeling to that which they had experienced towards the poor youth on May-day, at Mary Overie's Green. Billy the Bridge-shooter now became the centre of attraction to all the party, as he took up the thread of the discourse, saying—"Indeed, I vos astonished to see Master Edward come in vith my mother! And didn't she rate me soundly for my disbelief of her being a vitch? 'What,' said she, ven Master Edward vos asleep, and we were a vitching on him—'what,' said she, 'should have told me all that has come to pass, if I am not a witch? Is it nothing, think you, that three several times to night a coal should have flown out of the fire, and every time of a different shape?' 'It vould a been much more vunderful, mother,' said I, 'if their shapes had a been all alike.' Then she vent ou—'The first was like a coffin, and so fairly made, that I knew it was for speedy use; that spoke of coming death—and has not a man been murdered? The next was like but half a coffin; a death but half performed—and has not Master Edward, as you call him, been within an inch of death? The last that came, was like a large full purse!'—'Vell, mother,' said I, 'that's not comed at all events.' 'But it will, boy—it will,' she replied: and I vish it may——"

"But," enquired Edward, who possessed, as all else did in those days, a degree of superstition, "but, if your mother were not a witch, how came she to find me at that hour of the night, and in such a place? and what did she mean by saying she was sent to fetch me?"

"I axed that myself," said the lad; "and she said—'Do you think it's nothing,' for she generally begins her clevernesses by asking if it's nothing—and it very often is—'do you think it's nothing to see a spider creeping, and creeping from under your petticoats? I watched it,' said mother, 'all across the floor, and it went on, and on, until it came to some water I had spilt, and there it stopped; by that I knew it was at the water's brink, that what I was to find would no where else be found: so off I trudged, and didn't I find the youth; and now, silly boy, would you still say I'm not a witch!' I know mother 'll be burnt, I know she will; I keeps her in the marshes out of the way, on purpose that no one may hear her nonsense."

All the party agreed, however, that it was very strange, a very wonderful coincidence, a very extraordinary agreeing of facts, &c. &c.; but everybody laughed at the idea of believing in witchcraft, yet, inwardly every soul there determined there privately to pay a visit to the witch of the marshes. Billy-the-bridge-shooter, at his most earnest entreaty, was allowed to shoot the boat through Old London Bridge, instead of landing the party at the Swan stairs, and this he did in so masterly a manner, that all allowed the honourable name he bore was most meritoriously bestowed. Sir Filbut placed a piece of gold in his hand, and desired to know the address of his mother in the marshes, as he might, perchance, pay her a visit of charity. As the lad described the spot, not only were Flora's ears strained wide open to catch every word, but also those of the lovely Alyce; and it must be owned that Master Hewet, too, made up his mind not to forget the direction of the cunning woman of the marsh.

Such horrible murders as that of the weaver on the river, and of Miles in the open court, combined with the strange, nay, almost miraculous, discovery of the perpetrator, naturally became the topic of universal conversation. Every running newsman reaped a plentiful harvest, by retailing all the most minute particulars of how deep the wound was in the weaver's head—and how far the blood of Miles had flown, and how the greater part of it had spirted right over Harry Horton, Master Hewet's apprentice. "But who is the murderer?" said Checklocke the smith, for this dialogue took place in the upper, or more respectable room of the wine house, and was now filled by the traders and smaller merchants of the Bridge. "Oh!" replied the newsman, knowing his business too well to injure the respectability of the Cardinal's hat, by owning he had seen him there, "oh, a fellow from some distant part—no one seems to know him further than that they call him the Blear-eyed Bully; he's as tough as iron, for when he was put to the rack he only laughed; although it is well known he had accomplices, he has not betrayed a single name."

"No, nor will he," said saintly father Brassinjaw, who now looked smug and trim, and it being midday, was perfectly sober, and was now drinking a little sweetened water; "no, they will wring nothing from him. I have visited him night and day, at the intercession of that good young man, Harry Horton, who, although too ill himself to come to his master's, has not forgotten the spiritual welfare of that poor lost creature."

In part this was true, for Horton had employed his friend the priest to act as the go-between for him to the Bully, who laughed at Horton's fears, and sent him word to "Come to his execution, and see how a *man* could die."

"But what other news have you, good Master Knowy?" inquired Catchemayde; "how goes on the trial of the Queen?"

"Oh, her affair's so stale, it's scarcely worth the mentioning; but it will be a rather pretty execution on the 17th; but it is vastly like playing with the people's patience, methinks—first to give out that we were to have a bonfire, made of a real right earnest Queen, and then, to be put off in this way, with a mere slash-my-neck-and-it's-al-over."

"What!" said Silkworm the stringer; "is she only to have her head cut off, after all? then I shall not take the trouble to go and see it, I can tell 'em."

"Nor sha'l I," added Checklocke.

"And I'm sure I won't!" chimed in Catchemayde.

"And I'm sure," said the newsman, "you're all right if you don't go, for you wouldn't see it if you did. Why, bless you! so tender-hearted is our good, dear, sweet King Harry, so afraid that his dear Nanny should be hurt, that he has sent all the way to Calais for the French headsman."

Here the saintly father Brassinjaw, giving the newsman a sly wink, and beckoning him forward, whispered into his ear—"Good Master Knowy, canst thou not, in all thy budget, scrape up a little morsel of—of innocent scandal? hush—mum—it gives a piquant seasoning to thy discourse, friend Knowy."

The newsman, catching at the hint, said—"By-the-by, were I but sure that it would go no further, I could give you, friends, a rare bit of tittle-tattle; but no, I'll keep it to myself, for were it known that I had set it floating——"

The moment he threw in a dash of mystery, that moment did every one present desire to learn more.

"And, besides, it were cruel to draw an honest neighbour into ridicule."

"I love to laugh at my neighbours," said Silkworm.

"And I'd rather laugh than cry at any time, or at any thing," added Catchemayde.

Here Brassinjaw began to snore, and pretended to go fast asleep.

"Come, Master Knowy, speak out, man," said Checklocke; "we love a bit of scandal, particularly about our own dear friends; and see, Brassinjaw is fast asleep, so you need fear to offend no one here."

"Well then," said Knowy, "it's about a certain person, not a hundred miles from this house."

"Not Driggles," exclaimed one, "the lantern maker, whose wife broke his head with a ladle?"

"Or Bunks, the buttoner, who could not get up, for his wife had run away with his slops and his hose?" said another.

"Nearer than that," replied the newsman, "and his name begins with H."

"It can't be Master Hewet! No, you don't mean it?" and they all get closer round the newsman; and declared they would give a sound silver penny each of them, ay, that they would, if they could only get one good laugh at Master Hewet.

"Well, then, my friends, give me but the silver pennies, and I'll give you the laugh," saying this he held round his cap, into which they threw broken pieces of money; for the penny was then coined with a deeply indented cross upon it, which, if broken one way, made two *half pennies*, if broken again the other way, it formed four *fourthings*, or as we now say farthings.

Having received a good round sum, for scandal was as high in the market then, as it has been since, he began by saying, "Now, remember, I say nothing, I know nothing, and therefore can tell nothing, but it is odd, isn't it, that Master Hewet should have such a pretty wife?"

"Oh! come," said Catchemayde, "that won't do at all—no, no, there's nothing of scandal there, I'd be sworn."

"I didn't say there was—I only said it was odd—and it *is* odd, that twenty times a week, a dapper little page, splendidly dressed, should call on honest Master Hewet, and always brings some costly fruits,

or lovely flowers.—Dame Alyce, so the story goes, is wondrously fond of fruits and flowers—now it's odd, but mind, I say nothing farther than that it is odd, that Master Hewet's lovely wife is now no longer satisfied with a good pillion behind her loving lord, but needs must learn to ride upon a noble steed herself."

"Well, that is odd, I own," said Catchemayde.

"And it's odd, methinks, that the very horse she learns to ride upon belongs to the master of the dapper little page——"

"And who is he?" exclaimed more than one.

"I say not who, but only that it is odd—that on the left arm of this same page, the arms should there be found of young Sir Filbut Fussy!"

"No?" ejaculated a dozen at the least.

"And odder still it is, that he who teaches the merchant's lovely wife to ride, is rich Sir Filbut Fussy's self! But not a word, not a breath of what I've told you as being odd, for it's only odd, and nothing more, depend upon it. And now a right good day to you all, my worthy sirs." And so saying, the newsmen made his exit; and soon after the rest of the party, making their several comments upon what they had heard, and uttering a few jokes at the expense of Master Hewet. The moment they had all left the room, Bassinjaw got up, put on his bonnet, and left the place muttering as he went—"She shall do a pretty penance for this, in purse as well as person. I'll not leave a bit of skin on her knees, nor a silver penny in her purse. I'm not angry with her for disliking her husband—I have hated him ever since he refused to be one of my flock. Nor am I angry that she should discover beauties in the rich fool, Sir Filbut Fussy; no, for all this I might find absolution; but I'll never forgive her keeping the secret so snug from me. Why, properly used, it would have been a little fortune to me; but it may not yet be too late to do something in the matter." A short time after this, Brassinjaw might be seen seated upon a little fat long-eared mule,

trotting along the road up Chancery Lane, then a lane bordered by green hedges clothed in May's most tempting livery. Making for a lonely cottage in the fields near Holbourne, where Harry Horton had then taken up his quarters, the whole tale of his own, or his father's illness being a mere subterfuge, until he saw how matters were likely to turn. Brassinjaw was not so great a fool as to imagine that Harry Horton was not aware of all that had been going on under his father's roof, and was now on his way to come to an explanation, and to settle upon what terms he was either to speak out or hold his peace; the scheme of villany concocted between them at this interview we must leave the incidents themselves to elucidate. But this much we may here relate, that Sir Filbut became one of the saintly father Brassinjaw's flock, and it occurred strangely enough, that father Brassinjaw's memory became suddenly so bad, that he was for ever appointing the same day, and the very same hour, for receiving the confessions both of Sir Filbut and the lovely Alyce, by which it naturally occurred that they were for ever meeting in the chapel of Saint Thomas of the Bridge.

It was Friday, the 19th of May, when, about the middle of the day, a single gun was heard to boom loudly from the Tower walls; at that moment, the head of the lovely Anne Boleyn, had fallen beneath the sword of the Calais executioner. The hour of the Queen's execution had been kept a profound secret from the public, so that the awful scene was witnessed by few.

The gun the citizens had heard was the signal to tell King Henry, who had gone hunting, that he was now a widower; and it is said, that when the anxiously-expected but welcome sound reached the heartless miscreant's ear, he ordered his attendants then to "slip the dogs, and let the chase begin."

Now, although the good citizens had been prevented enjoying so rare a sight as that of gazing upon

the first female blood that had ever flowed in England on a public scaffold, they had been, for some hours previously, feasting their eyes upon a different kind of death, which, from its lingering nature, the imagination can scarcely conceive aught more horrible—it was the execution of the Blear-eyed Bully.

The trial of the Blear-eyed Bully, as might be expected, was but a short affair; the evidence concerning the murder of the weaver was too powerful to admit of a moment's doubt; and the second murder, within the Court, could not for an instant be denied; indeed, the Bully knew himself to be so utterly lost, that he would not answer a single question. As the first crime had been committed upon the river, the sentence passed was, that he should be chained to a pile, driven into the bed of the river at low water, and there remain until he had had three tides rise over him.

The spot appointed for the execution was off the stairs at Billingsgate, being a part of the river frequented by the reckless portion of the city, and therefore well adapted to so striking an example. As early as six in the morning the preparations had begun. The water-bailiffs had arranged a semicircle of boats, containing their officers, all fully armed, at some distance around the fatal pile to which the poor wretch was to be bound, thus keeping an open space about the culprit, and at the same time preventing any chance of a rescue.

About an hour after the turn of tide, such a yelling, and shouting, and huzzaing, was heard, that it was not difficult to guess that the prisoner was on his way to death. From the bridge an excellent view was obtained, the bailiffs' boats keeping the space quite clear, everything close to the pile could be clearly distinguished. Presently, two boats put off; in the one sat the Blear-eyed Bully, securely guarded; in the other, were the priests of St. Thomas of the Bridge, amongst them our saintly father Brassinjaw.

To the front side of the pile had been affixed a sort of table to support the feet of the murderer; but this was now out of sight, the water having risen nearly two feet above it. A deafening shout burst forth as the Bully took his place upon the spot appointed, the water now reaching to his knees. A chain was then bound about his body and the pile, like a serpent, beginning at his feet, and coiling round and round upwards, till it finished by being passed twice around his neck, and fastened by a strong staple to the back of the pile.

Before the preparations were completed, the poor wretch could clearly feel the waters rising, and rising, slowly, it is true, but surely: yet the Blear-eyed Bully bore his fate as though his soul had been wrought in steel. At every rising wave, the only change that even the priests, who never ceased to pray, and to exhort the dying man to repent, while yet it was time, could perceive, was a stronger compression of the lip, and a firmer fixing of the eye. His hands were fastened in the attitude of prayer, and between them was bound a crucifix. In this horrid situation, he had to be exposed for hours, for, to him, death came too slowly—and yet his only hope was death! As the spectators grew tired, some moved away, and others rowed nearer, to get a better view of the doomed murderer. So passed away the first dreadful hour—so the next, and higher still up heaved the monster river! but, oh! so gently, that his deadly approach was scarcely felt or seen.

Master Hewet and Edward Osborne kept their rooms for that day, for they felt that in a degree they were mixed up with the wretched man who was then undergoing the dreadful expiation of all his crimes: but Flora Gray, although she had been commanded not to go out upon the balcony, peep she would, and let little Anne peep too, and more than peep, for she stood the child upon the upper edge of the balcony, and holding her fast, pointed

out to her all that was moving upon the flood beneath.

The waters had risen up to the very mouth of the murderer. The Blear-eyed Bully's eyes protruded farther and farther, as despair seemed to take possession of his soul; he held back his head as far as the firm manner in which it had been placed, permitted, in the vain endeavour to raise his lips above the stream; this was indeed a moment fraught with death, for it was at that instant the gun was fired from the Tower.

The sudden sound of cannon made Alyce run into the lower balcony, when, who can paint her horror, as from the balcony above, she saw her only child fall headlong into the raging cataracts beneath! Her screams were frightful, as were those of Flora, who, startled at the sound of the cannon, had let loose her hold—the child was gone!

Of all the crowd of boats, not one dared shoot the bridge to attempt the rescue of the child. But, oh! what a shout was heard, as Edward Osborne was seen to leap from the balcony's upper roof into the raging flood.

Never were the instructions of a great master in any art more fully rewarded by success, than in the case of Edward Osborne. He buffeted the waves until he mastered their power sufficiently to allow him to call in the energies of his mind to direct his course; at last a loud peal of triumph rent the air, as the beholders saw, to their astonishment, the youth floating on the surface, and with one hand upholding his master's child. And there was one more to share the glory, the worthy master of such a pupil. Billy the-bridge-shooter had that very moment proved his right to the title he so nobly bore, and his was the first boat that reached the almost-exhausted youth. Osborne, with the child still held close to his breast, was soon landed, and the mother and sire both kneeling in thankfulness at his feet.

Before we close this strange and eventful chapter, we are compelled to add one incident more, scarcely less strange, and certainly not less eventful to our coming tale, than those which have preceded it.

The day was passing rapidly away, when the tide having done its worst upon the murderer, was at its lowest. There still was seen the dead body chained to the fatal pile, for the law enacted that three tides should cover it. At this moment, a boat coming up the river, in which was a solitary passenger, with trunks and other things bespeaking the traveller, was being rowed towards the landing-place of Billingsgate. The waterman explained to him all that had occurred, and curiosity impelled him to make the man row as close as possible to the executed criminal. Indeed, so close had the man brought the boat, that when the stranger who was standing up in it turned round, his face came almost in contact with that of the dead man. He gave one horrid shriek, and falling backward, exclaimed—"Oh God, it is my brother!"

CHAPTER VII.

THE CRIPPLE OF THE BRIDGE.

Alas!

For in the starres, clearer than is glass,
Is written, God wot, whoso could it read,
The death of every man withouten drede,
* * but mennès wittès be so dull,
That no wight can well read to the full.

CHAUCER.

NIGHT had fallen, and on the summit of that tower of death, the Traitor's Gate, the Cripple sate and mused. There, all absorbed, his fingers gently strayed from string to string o'er that poor friendly lute, which oft before had solaced weary hours, and made the gall of disappointed nature flow for a time in kindness to man. He gazed up in the heavens, and paused to think—what wondrous tales of joy, of sorrow, virtue,

and of vice, those stars might tell, were they but once to speak; and, casting a melancholy look around, he sang, in a plaintive strain—

Death is here, and death is there,
And death is round us every where;
Then do not let us quarrel more,
For, oh! so few the hours of bliss,
That bloom upon life's barren shore,
'Twere madness not to treasure this.

Sure every moment of this life,
Should be the parent of a smile,
Not wasted thus in angry strife—
Such were God's goodness to revile.

Then let our future life be past,
Encirled by love's holiest spell,
As though we deemed each hour the last—
Our last it may be!—who can tell?
For death is here, and death is there,
And death is round us every where.

And he sat for some time absorbed in reflection, when he was suddenly startled by the sound of a voice. So unexpected was it, that the Cripple grasped his staff, and stood upon his guard. A moment more, and the Cripple, dropping his trusty weapon, sent forth his well-known screeching laugh, for he recognised the comer—it was Edward Osborne!

"Well," said he, "this is indeed an honour the Cripple of the Bridge-gate Tower could little dream of. Why, boy! you are the only living mortal that has ventured here, besides myself, for I know not how many a day. So few that do get up here ever get down again, that I'm not over pestered by calling friends. What ails you?—you tremble, boy!"

"I do," replied Edward, "I own I do, at finding myself thus suddenly surrounded by all these ghastly evidences of violence and death. Willy! you professed, unasked, to be my friend; I now demand fulfilment of such profession. You are the last in all

this mighty city that most would come to, craving a kindly favour; you are the first I have ever asked a favour from."

"Why, boy, you overpower me with your flattery!" said the poor Cripple, who smiled with evident pleasure at finding at last one soul on earth who thought him worthy of his confidence. "What can so humble, so poor, so *ugly* a wretch as I am, do to pleasure one whom nature has stamped as her own especial favourite."

"Willy, they tell me you have a beauty in your mind, which far outweighs in others their beauteousness of form."

"Ha, ha! ho, ho! he, he—! And pray, boy, what may my great beauty be? Wonders will never cease. But, tell me, lad, and tell me quickly, for I cannot too soon know my charms, what may my wondrous beauty be?"

"TRUTH!" replied Osborne.

"Truth!" echoed the Cripple; "it is only the really wise who always act by truth: your liars and your rogues are ever fools—they lose tenfold what they gain—mark that through life, and that you'll find's a sterling truth. Now, lad, I promise one thing, for I *am* your friend, that what I say to you shall team with nought but truth."

"It is feeling that," said Osborne, "which has made me seek you. But let us descend, for this is an awful place to put the question I would ask your truth to answer."

The Cripple, to relieve young Osborne of his fear, consented to descend; and as they crept down the dark winding stairs, he heard the Cripple bidding a kind good night to all his children, and admonishing them to watch, and not fall down asleep, as sometimes they did,—and closing the turret door, followed Osborne to the lodge below.

Although it was the month of May, and warm for that time of year, a blazing fire was burning. The

Cripple first hung up a thick sort of curtain over the little casement—"For," said he, "the good folk of the Bridge are mighty curious, and are for ever prying into my domestic habits—what do they expect to see? believe me, there are many stranger scenes to be witnessed in houses I could name, and on the Bridge too, than ever passed within the Bridge-gate Tower."

He brought forth three trenchers, on one of which was a piece of salted beef—the usual food of the humbler class for more than half the year—with bread and salt, and a flagon of sweet ale; then drawing a large pot, or saucepan, that stood upon the hob, further on to the fire, he seated himself, and looked into Osborne's face; then pointing to the food, said—"Now you are more at your ease, repeat your question, and I'll answer it: but warm yourself, and drink, for I know of no power to exorcise or lay your midnight spectres half so certain as a blazing fire and a flagon of bright strong ale."

Osborne felt little inclination to eat, for his mind was full of the strange things he wished to lay open to the Cripple. "Willy," said he, drawing nearer to the Cripple, and almost whispering his words, "do you believe the dead ever again can walk this earth—that to doubt your eyes would be to doubt your reason?—do you believe in ghosts? If ever the dead were permitted to revisit this our earth—the dead has appeared to me!"

So solemnly did Osborne pronounce this awful conviction of his mind, that the Cripple paused from the work he was upon, and gazed in wonder at the youth.

"You know the wretch whose death I was the cause of, though justly? Upon his sentence being passed, he bade me guard well my midnight couch by prayer, or I should see him as sure as the clock should strike the dead hour of night. Now, although I know that Heaven's power can easily keep in check the fiends of darkness, yet I must own that such a denunciation made so deep an impression upon my mind,

that when night came I listened to the tolling of St. Paul's great bell with fear and horror. I have wrought my mind to such a pitch of nervous dread, that I cannot close my eyes of nights until the fatal hour be passed. Not knowing what to do, and seeing my mistress's confessor, the father Brassinjaw, leaving our house, I entreated him to advise me. Instead of comforting, he has taken from me even the hope I had, and tells me that all I suffer is a just punishment for not before becoming one of his flock. He has ordered me to attend the midnight prayers in the chapel of St. Thomas-of-the-Bridge; last night I did."

Here he was interrupted, and made to start, by the sudden boiling over of the pot upon the fire. The Cripple, laughing, pushed the saucepan off the fire, lifted the lid, and stirring the contents round with a wooden spoon, again covered them, and desired Osborne to proceed.

Osborne, drawing a deep breath, continued—"Yes, Willy, last night I attended at the appointed prayers: few persons were there besides the priests, and when the service was ended I fell upon my knees to pray for ease of mind, and becoming absorbed in the fervour of my devotions, I did not perceive all else had left the place, save one man, who was extinguishing the lights upon the altar. As I rose to quit the chapel, I was startled by seeing the figure of a man standing in a gloomy corner; he was enveloped in a dark mantle, and motionless as death. I had to pass that spot. I kept my eyes fixed upon the figure—I knew not why: when, just within arm's reach, it suddenly threw open the mantle, and there I beheld, if e'er my eyes saw truly, the ghost of him who had so lately suffered for his crimes. He stood before me in the very habit in which he died. I covered my eyes for an instant with my hands, for I feared to look upon it, and when I had gained courage to do so, the figure was gone, but in its place I found this written paper. In stooping to seize it, I fancied I again saw the shadow

gliding down the steps leading to the crypt below. I would have followed, but was prevented by Father Bassinjaw, who, at that moment, ascended by those very steps. I exclaimed—'Let me pass! let me pass! 'tis there! 'tis there!' He held me back, and when I explained what I had seen, he smiled at my credulity, and showed me how impossible it was that aught could have descended to the crypt and he not see it. He told me to hasten home, and, for the future, to be obedient to whatever commands he might lay upon me, as the only means of relieving myself from the power of evil spirits, who certainly then possessed me. I did return home, but not to sleep, but to ponder over and over the contents of this paper, which I had unconsciously brought from the chapel. It is evidently written in blood; look at it—look at it, Willy, and tell me what you think?"

The Cripple took the paper, and read it aloud—*"If you would avoid the miserable fate the fiends have doomed you to, seek the right road, by consulting the witch of the marsh. To-morrow night, at ten, the moon is at the full; be there, but be alone—remember, be alone, or a more dreadful doom awaits you than that of the shade, which, from the grave, now warns you. No mortal must know what you this night have seen—remember!"*

"Now, how would you have me act?" inquired Osborne.

"Go, and go unfearingly," said the Cripple; "the spirit means no harm, or it had chosen some other witch; she is, if I mistake not, the mother of your new-made friend; therefore, if she have power to raise up devils, she will have power, too, to prevent their hurting him who fought to save her. Where is her son?"

"Oh, far away," replied Osborne. "Ever since we saved my master's child, the merchant has befriended the poor Bridge-shooter, and has sent him, as a safeguard to the merchandise they are shipping, some miles down the river."

"And Hewet, where is he?"

"The merchant and Horton are both at Hampton Court; for, by Cromwell's intercession, Master Hewet is now one of King Henry's merchants; he has gone to take orders from his Highness for stuffs for our new Queen's coronation."

"Then his wife is left alone; she must be very dull," said the Cripple.

"She would be," replied Osborne, "but for the kindness of Sir Filbert Fussy, who sometimes comes and reads and sings, to amuse her, for hours together."

"Indeed!" said the Cripple, "he is wondrously kind!" Then again stirring the saucepan, he hummed—

"We must set a man to watch,
Dance o'er my Lady Lea;
We must set a man to watch
For this poor La-dee."

"Then you advise me, Willy, to go to the marshes to-morrow night, at the tenth hour," said Osborne, "and alone?"

"I do; for who knows what the stars may portend?" replied the Cripple. "And now home to rest; for it must be on the stroke of midnight."

Osborne turned suddenly pale, prayed to be allowed to remain until after that dreaded hour had passed. "I should be less fearful," said he, "if even my master were at home."

"Your master! curse him!" said the Cripple; "but I shall boil his head yet—I shall boil his head yet!" and then he chuckled again, and began to stir round the smoking cauldron.

"What do you mean," said Osborne, "by that disgusting phrase which you are so frequently repeating?"

"What do I mean?" replied the Cripple, still chuckling and stirring the steaming pot; "what do I mean?"—the deep sound of St. Paul's bell began to

toll the twelfth hour, as he continued—"this is what I mean," and saying which, he thrust a hook into the cauldron, and drew thence a human head.

"Horror!" exclaimed Osborne, trembling all over; for in the features he recognised those of the Blear-eyed Bully.

"Ho, ho! ha, ha! he, he!—foolish boy," said the Cripple, "fear it not; but I had forgotten at the moment whose head it was. It was brought this afternoon for me to prepare for being hung up upon a gibbet to-morrow, as a warning to all who take delight in committing murders upon the Thames. There, there it is in again, so calm your fears. This is the second I have boiled to-day, the other was of a very different mould; it was that of a poor monk they executed this morning, because he would not forswear his conscience, and take an oath that the Pope was Anti-Christ, and that King Henry was so pure, that he ought to be supreme head of our Holy Church. The poor creature would have been saved, but your master's friend, the blacksmith minister, the great Cromwell, who they say is soon to be a lord, swore that if the jury did not find him guilty, and hang him up, he'd hang them up instead."

Cromwell was ever a bitter enemy to the poor monks; they were executed by hundreds. For Henry, having cut off the head of the pontifical power, found the limbs but incumbrances, and began to lop them off one by one, and occasionally in greater numbers; but the time for their total annihilation had not yet arrived. The great delight of Henry seemed to be in burning those who refused to follow the Romish religion, and in hanging those who followed it too closely. If they denied his supremacy in holy matters, it was of little consequence which persuasion they followed; there were but two roads to go, the one led to the flames, the other to the gibbet.

It was the head of one of these poor conscientious, though, perhaps, mistaken creatures, that the Cripple

had that evening been fixing upon the tower, just before Osborne visited him there.

Edward, feeling not only horror, but disgust, to see the unconcerned manner in which the Cripple fulfilled his dreadful duty, bade his companion a hearty good night, and hurried away.

There were few places in London more melancholy in appearance, than the road across Old London Bridge at midnight, the over-hanging buildings, in many places, nearly shutting out the little light the stars might lend; and then the irregular line of houses, here projecting, here receding; here a deep recess, as if made purposely for the concealment of some lurking robber; there long tunnel-like archways, as if portals to the realms of darkness.

Edward Osborne, at this moment painfully alive to external influences, was startled by hearing, at no great distance from him, sounds of music. He stopped—he listened; then creeping onwards, and taking advantage of one of those deep recesses we have noticed, he was enabled to watch, unseen, a party of dark figures, enveloped in cloaks and masks, who were performing beneath the window, as he thought, of his master's house. He had approached so close, that not a syllable escaped his ear; and thus he heard the midnight minstrels sing—

The stars are bright, are bright indeed,
But we know something brighter still;
'Tis not the dew-bespangled mead,
Nor moonlight dancing on the rill:
'Tis not the northern meteor's light,
Nor glowworm's tiny lamp so clear;
'Tis not the diamond, sparkling bright—
But 'tis the eye of Alyce, dear.
Then wake, dear Alyce, wake, we pray—
And let thine eyes change night to day.

Sweet is the breath of early morn,
But we know something sweeter far;
'Tis not the mellow sounding horn
That lulls to rest the last pale star;

'Tis not the violet, nor the rose,
Nor that sweet hour when daylight dies,
Like infant, sinking in repose—
But 'tis the sunlight of those eyes,
Then wake, dear Alyce, wake, we pray,
And let thine eyes change night to day.

Did his ears deceive him? No, the name of Alyce floated on the breeze. He could not be mistaken. But who would dare to sing thus openly the praises of his lovely mistress? 'Tis true, that another Alyce, and with bright eyes too, dwelt on the opposite side; and she was known to use those bright eyes for other purposes than for reading prayers.

Such were the thoughts of Edward, during the pause between the verses; but, as the second strain began, he fancied he must be dreaming, for surely he saw the figure of a female, half concealed, standing by the casement of his master's room; and, presently, a white hand stole gently to the latch that held the window close, and then the lattice slightly moved, as if to admit the sound more clearly; but all was evidently done with greatest caution, that those without should know not that their flattery was listened to.

The serenaders having finished their task, or fancying the night-watch coming, moved away. As they passed the spot where Osborne stood concealed, one or two of the voices sounded familiar to his ear: the only words he could distinguish, for the party moved rapidly along, were—"Be not afraid, success is certain; Alyce—"

The moment they were past, he hurried to the spot they had left, and gazed, not at his master's house, for he could not bring his mind to believe that Alyce Hewet could possibly be the subject of any lover's midnight adoration, but his eye was directed to the opposite dwelling: all there was still. He looked, and looked, till fancy half pictured the form of Alyce Vaughan, their young and pretty neighbour, sitting by her latticed window.

Having quite satisfied his mind that it must be she, whose charms had called forth the praises he had heard, he opened his own door; but, as he entered, he thought he saw another figure issuing from a recess, like the one he had himself occupied, and stealthily creep along in the same direction the serenaders had taken.

His thoughts suddenly reverting to the shadowy form he had seen in the chapel, he hastily entered and closed the door.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE KING AND THE MERCHANT.

But down on knees went every manner wight,
And thanked him with all their heartes might.

CHAUCER.

"God's blood, man! what do you fear? Am I so terrible a monster, that the very sight of me should make you tremble like a love-sick girl as she first confesses her naughty passion, before her frowning priest? Arise, and speak out boldly what you have to say."

These words were addressed by the giant, Henry the Eighth, King of England, to Master William Hewet, who humbly knelt before his Highness, in the beautiful gardens of Hampton Court. At some little distance behind Master Hewet, was Harry Horton, also kneeling.

At the King's command, they both arose, but kept their eyes most modestly fixed upon the earth.

"You owe me no thanks," said the King; "take them all to our trusty and well-beloved Cromwell; 'tis he to whom they are justly due. Now, merchant, shew me thy stuffs and wares."

Upon this Horton advanced, for in his charge were all the samples they had brought, and sinking upon

one knee he held up the various cases, that Henry might see to what wondrous perfection the looms and handy-works of various nations had been brought.

"For such variety, Maaster Hewet," said the King, "you must have ransacked half the world: hast thou many ships?"

"Thanks to your Highness for teaching us how to build them, and the royal encouragement ever held out to all who would advance the knowledge of the sea, I have many—and such as would do the King's Highness good service, were a foreign foe to threaten his happy shores."

"Well spoken, merchant; but we think while bluff King Hal—ha, ha, you blush, do you, for you see I know how the villains of the city profane our royal name—no, no, while bluff King Hal shall reign, we need fear no foreign foe; send thy ships whither thou wilt in peace: to what lands do they mainly sail?"

Master Hewet was so delighted at the King's affability, and feeling he was addressed upon a subject in which his soul delighted, started off, almost forgetful of the royal presence. "They sail, your Highness, principally to Brazil and Guinea; to Sicily, Candia, and Chio, Cyprus, and Tripoli, and even to Barutti in Syria."

"And carry away all your poor King's gold, I suppose?"

"Not so, your Highness; we take our woollen cloths and calf skins, and in exchange bring silks, csmblets, rhubarb, malmsey, muscadell, and other wines, oils, cotton, wool, rich Turkey carpets, galls and spices—"

"Tut, tut, tut, man!" exclaimed the King, "we want not the ledger of our Custom-house rehearsed; pay but the duties, and I'll forgive the items." He then again looked over every article, asking innumerable questions; then turning to a page who waited at a distance—made a sign which appeared to be perfectly understood, for the page hurried away towards a gay and noble party, which was attending upon one

lovely creature with perfect adulation. This beauty might, with but little stretch of the imagination, have been mistaken for Venus's self, paying a visit to Flora's bower. The instant the page approached, she made a slight, but gracious courtesy to all around, left them, and hastened towards the King.

"Come hither, sweetheart," said Henry, as she approached; then taking her hand, he placed it within his own arm, and smiling at her, "Now, Jane," said he, "let me see if thou be a thrifty housewife, or a careless jade, as I have known some to become, when made mistress of their husband's purse as well as heart. Try thy skill at bating down this unconscionable jew of a merchaut, who, did he have his way, would leave our exchequer as bare as the Pope would have done had I not clipped his nails, or rather, I should say, cut off his hands, and thus made him give up his hold upon our land."

Queen Jane, for it was she, the late Jane Seymour, servant to the Queen just dead, but now herself Queen of England, appeared at once to have gained right royal ideas of extravagant magnificence; nothing was too costly, nothing too splendid; but she had such a meek and humble way of expressing her desires, that the enraptured King felt himself to be the delinquent, in giving way to such wicked extravagance as they were then pursuing.

"You are tired, love," said the King, looking anxiously into the eyes of his newly-made wife, "we will choose no more to-day; to-morrow, Hewet, we will dismiss you. I hope my people have cared for you while you have been at the court?" Hewet bowed, as did Horton, who now catching the eye of the King, Henry said—"Stand forth, young sir; are you my merchant's apprentice, Henry Horton?"

Both Horton and Hewet could not disguise their surprise at such a question coming from the King, who, laughing, added, "You see, friend Hewet, a King has eyes and ears, that extend far beyond the

walls of his palaco. I know more of you and yours than you dream of; for instance, you have a monstrous pretty wife. Don't be jealous, Jane! But I must see her, Hewet; I must call and see her—I'm fond of pretty wives!"

Hewet and Horton felt that it required no ghost to tell them that; but touching the King's threatened visit to his wife, the merchant thought it was an honour he could very well dispense with; and both master and apprentice were still further surprised when the King continued—"Horton's time of service is nearly expired—is it not?"

Both master and man here bowed.

"Have you any objection," he said, chuckling at his own intended wit, "to transfer his indentures to one Harry Tudor, a worthy, respectable, hard-working man, in his vocation? he is a large manufacturer of titles, and mends holes in great men's estates, by patching them up with heiresses; he also deals in coronets, and often gets cheated by his customers, who seldom make good their promised payments; he deals in a wholesale way at times, and has vast stores in many ports, as well as in London—know you such a dealer?"

Hewet and Horton were too much delighted at finding the king in such good humour not to chime in with his conceit, so put on looks of perfect innocence, as if they found it impossible to guess whom the king could really mean.

"Well, then," said Henry, "if you recognise him not by the name of Harry Tudor, I'll warrant ye, ye scurvy city knaves, that you know him well enough if I call him bluff King Hal—he wants an apprentice, and proposes to take Horton off your hands; what say you?"

The merchant knew not what to say, doubting how much the king meant as a joke, how much for earnest.

Observing Hewet's embarrassment, and perceiving the queen with her ladies approaching, Henry told

them to wait upon Cromwell, who should explain all his wishes.

So bowing, and receding backwards as they bowed, they managed to retreat into a friendly avenue, and then turning, pursued their way toward the palace.

They had scarcely ended their midday meal, when a page, entering their apartment, delivered the commands of the queen, that Master Hewet should attend her pleasure in her own chamber; and another message from Thomas Cromwell, that Henry Horton should forthwith repair to his private apartments, and be honoured by an interview with that great favourite of fortune, and learn, through him, the pleasure of the King.

Horton followed the page, and, as he had to remain some time in the ante-room, he could not resist a feeling of disgust at witnessing the cringing servility of lords and nobles, churchmen, and men high in the law, to all those who assumed the power of opening, or keeping closed to them, the door to the audience chamber of this second most powerful man in the whole realm.

Thomas Cromwell was, as the reader already knows, the son of Walter Cromwell, now a brewer, formerly a blacksmith, at Putney, who had raised himself, by his own talents, to the exalted pitch he had now attained. When a lad, he had run away from home; was afterwards a clerk in an English factory at Antwerp; then entered the army, under Prince Charles, Duke of Bourbon, and, it is said, was at the sacking of Rome, in 1527. After acting as a trooper in the Italian wars, he once more resumed the character of a mercantile man in Venice, then returning to England, took to the study of the law, was appointed solicitor to the great Cardinal Wolsey, after whose fall he solicited an audience of the king, and proposed such bold steps of defiance towards the Pope, who still refused to sanction the divorce of the king from Catherine, and his union with his then beloved Anne

Boleyn, that Henry at once took him into his confidence, made him one of his council, the head of which he very soon became, and next to the king himself, swayed the whole power of the realm.

Henry, from being one of the richest monarchs in the world, which he was at his accession, had been so prodigal with his wealth, that he now found himself at times very straitened in his means; but here again the boundless resources of Cromwell's mind in discovering expedients once more shone forth. He had been the instrument of severing for ever the power of Rome from this land; he now was busily maturing a scheme for the total suppression of the monasteries and religious houses all over the kingdom.

Fortunately for the success of Cromwell's newly-formed scheme, the whole fabric of the church in England had, from ages of corruption, descended to such a depth of degradation, that the difficulty did not lie in finding ample specimens of the rottenness of the system, but, amongst so many weeds of noxious growth, the labour was to discover the virtuous exceptions.

Had Henry been as rich now as he had found himself upon coming to the throne, this great war against the monasteries had, perhaps, never taken place, at least in his reign; but his necessities made him listen with a greedy ear to any plan which was likely to replenish his exhausted coffers; and nothing could do this so effectually as at once seizing upon the enormous wealth, in lands, and gold, and jewels, possessed by the overgrown, overbearing, monastic powers. As an instance of the wealth of religious houses, it is said that at one time the Templars alone possessed no less than sixteen thousand manors.

To bring about the degradation of the monks, the friars, and general priesthood, Cromwell required agents who knew no virtue but that of obedience to his will. It was on this account he had fixed upon Horton as a fitting tool, for he had spies in all directions, to find out who and what men were.

Presently the gentleman in waiting called the name of Master Henry Horton. Horton, who felt that now or never was his chance, arose from the seat on which he had been resting, and from which he had been studying another chapter in the book of human nature; but it was an easy chapter, and required as little conning then as it does at this day. The whole interest of that chapter might be summed up in one word—SELF! He had learnt it now by heart, so entered the audience chamber of the great Thomas Cromwell, armed at every point to gain the prize he coveted—advancement.

The room into which he was ushered was small, and displayed no great magnificence of appointments. Cromwell was seated, writing; he did not condescend to raise his head, nor did he cease from his occupation, but as he wrote, he said—"Your name is Horton, Henry Horton—you knew a man they called the Blear-eyed Bully?"

Horton, more than once in his life—which was, it must be owned, but yet a short one—had been surprised at what he had heard; but to say that he was now *surprised*, would be to use a term of unmeaning weakness—he was paralysed!

Horton was about to offer something after the fashion of an excuse for his unfortunate knowledge of such a character; but he was interrupted by Cromwell, saying, "I require no answer; I merely put the question to show Henry Horton that I *know* him. Possessing, as he now is aware I do, his real character, he has merely to say—will he serve the king's highness, or will he not?"

Horton, upon whom the few words uttered by Cromwell had all the effect intended, felt that to beat about the bush with such a man was to lose the game altogether, answered boldly—"With heart, and body, and soul!" and then stood silently awaiting his new patron's pleasure to speak.

Cromwell now, for the first time, raised his eyes

towards the youth, and, by the expression of his own countenance, read something in that of the other which pleased him much.

"Be seated," said Cromwell; then looking him full in the face, he continued—"You know something of ecclesiastical life, though a mere clothworker's apprentice—do you not?"

"I do," was Horton's answer; "and more than I should say was holy."

"Who taught you?—the saintly Father Brassinjaw, of St. Thomas's Chapel, on the Bridge—ay?"

"He has taught me somewhat of priestly rogueries! but my own observation has taught me more."

"Then you think, young as you are, you could detect a flaw, if there were one, in the lives of either abbot, or monk, or even in that of a pretty nun?"

"In the last I'm sure I could," he said, smiling.

"You see, young sir, that the whole world has become so wicked, that now there is even an outcry against those to whom we have hitherto always looked for examples of virtue and of piety. Now, to save the king's realms from utter ruin and the wrath of Heaven, it has become incumbent upon us, who are the humble instruments by which either the weal or woe of this great kingdom is to be brought about, to institute such rigorous investigations, that the guilty shall not escape, nor shall the innocent be made to suffer for others' crimes. A commission is about to be issued, to examine into the lives and habits of every member of the religious houses that now are covering and devouring the land. It is upon that commission you will be employed; your duty is to find out vices; from what I have heard, I imagine you know the meaning of the word, so that there needs no further explanation. You will receive an order upon the king's treasurer for your proper appointments; be vigilant, and remember that it is vice, and only vice, that you are to ferret out wherever you are commanded to appear. Take this dispatch to my house in Throg-

morton Street, and there await further instructions. I will make all arrangements with your former master. You are now in the service of Thomas Cromwell."

Horton took the dispatch, and bowing profoundly, left the presence chamber.

A groom was already in waiting to conduct him to the various offices he had to pass through; and, without having seen master Hewet, he soon found himself mounted on one of the king's horses, hurrying towards London. When he arrived there, which he did in an incredibly short space of time, for his impatience would not allow him to loiter upon the road, the first person he went to was his late master's tailor, for he felt that the blue and white livery of the apprentice was but ill-becoming to one of the king's highness's commissioners, which he knew he was soon to be. He stopped at a small tailor's shop, near Aldgate. Within, upon a workboard, were seated an old man and a lanky mild-faced boy. The old man had spectacles upon his nose, and was, at the moment Horton stopped, admonishing his son for neglect of duty, by being ever employed in reading, when he should be working. "But I'm not, father," said the boy, "indeed I'm not; I do more work in the day than any journeyman I know."

"But that only proves," said the old man, "how much more you might do, but for those stupid books. I'm of the same opinion with that good creature, Father Brassinjaw, who says he has little doubt of printing having been the invention of the devil, in order to injure the Pope, and all his loving subjects."

"Talking of the Pope," said the boy, "puts me in mind of the Pope's head on Cornhill. I can't discover anywhere what that house could have been; it must have pertained in olden time to some great estate, or rather to the king of this realm, as may be inferred both from the largeness thereof, and by the arms, to wit, three leopards passant, gardant, which were the whole arms of England before the reign of

Edward III., that quartered them with the arms of France, three fleur-de-lis——”

“Boy, boy, you drive me mad,” exclaimed the old tailor; “one can never mention a single word, but it calls forth your nonsense about some old place in London. There, you’ve got a book under your legs now.”

“I know I have, father; for when I am winding thread, or doing anything that does not require my eyes, I always read between my legs, and I’m sure that can do no harm to any one.”

And who was this boy? It was one who was laying the foundation of an unostentatious immortality; it was the kind-hearted, simple-minded, industrious John Stow—the beloved of all the later historians of our land, the indefatigable searcher after truth, the “Old,” the “Venerable Stow.”

“Come here,” said Horton, in an authoritative tone, “and hold my horse; do you hear?”

Young Stow looked up, as did the old man from over his spectacles, and both evinced great astonishment at seeing the apprentice, Harry Horton, alighting from a superb horse. Young Stow ran out to hold the bridle, and Horton entered the tailor’s dwelling.

“Why, master Harry,” said the old man, “what want ye, lad? Doth thy slops still cut thee at the knee? or does your master require my attendance?”

“What master?” enquired Horton, as a sort of leading question, to enable him to touch upon the change in his condition.

“Why, marry, good Master Hewet; what other master wouldst thou have?”

“Hewet, bah! he may do full well to commune with, for dyers, or weavers, or botchers like thyself, but not for us of the king’s service.”

“Art thou mad, boy?” said the tailor, laughing heartily; “what means the lad?”

“It means, that if you would hold my custom, you

must hold a more be seeming tongue; and that you may do so, know that the favourite Cromwell is now my patron. Out with thy measures, and thy pattern book, for I have no time to waste with prick-louse knaves."

"Then hie thee to thy patron's tailor, puffed up frog!" said the man of thread and patches, with wounded pride, for prick-louse knave was the most degrading epithet that could be then applied to any one of his calling; "I want none of your custom; fools are ever fortune's favourites, so thou'lt be rich, depend on't; thou'lt be rich, depend on't! And if that rogue, Cromwell, be thy patron, tell him from me, he'll have none of my garden, either for love or money." Saying which, the old tailor, boiling with rage, returned to his shop-board, and set to work with a vigour that made him break his thread at every other stitch.

Horton, with enormous dignity, mounted his horse, and pursued his way towards his patron's dwelling, as young John Stow turned his mind in the same direction, and immediately began to study the History of Throgmorton Street.

CHAPTER IX.

A FRIEND IN NEED.

The mother was an elf by adventure
Ycome, by charmes or by sorcery.

CHAUCER.

THERE always appears to be, amongst the wonderful ingredients of which a human mind is composed, one little seed, or germ of superstition, which requires only to be warmed by the heat of imagination, to grow, to bud, to bloom, and in its turn bear seed, to propagate its kind in other minds. Ignorance is its native soil, and there it flourishes to an extent, almost miraculous in its power. By superstition, the

giant becomes a child ; the poor weak maid rushes undaunted to the field of blood, and with her single arm, makes armies fly before her !

It is to superstition we owe millions of cold-blooded murders by fire, and sword—by tortures, whose mere relation makes our own flesh creep upon our bones. How many a poor old wretch has been torn limb from limb, amidst the laughter of a mocking crowd, because some superstitious fool pronounced her WITCH !

We have entered into this slight dissertation upon superstition, from an amiable feeling towards our hero, Edward Osborne, fearing that the apparent tendency to superstition in his mind, might lower him in the estimation of our readers.

Osborne, be it remembered, had seen the ghost, or believed he had done so, of a man, whom he had witnessed commit two murders ! He had known that man to be executed, principally by his agency, in a manner the most lingering and appalling ; and in his hand he then beheld an invitation, written in blood, to attend some unholy rite, that should reveal to him his own future fate. Osborne was no coward ; but still it must be confessed, that, as the hour drew nigh for his promised journey to the hut of the Witch of the Marsh, he felt his heart, in a slight degree, fail him. “ Was he again to meet the dead ? ”

As the evening approached, Osborne was lost in an ocean of perplexities. His master and Horton being away, he felt himself more than ever responsible, The men employed in the merchant's business being gone, and the shop shut up, he found himself alone in the house with Flora Gray. Where could his mistress be ? she had left home in the morning, as usual, to take her riding-lesson with Sir Filbut Fussy, but had not yet returned.

Such a circumstance had never occurred before, and Flora became uneasy, and began to foretell all sorts of misfortunes. Perhaps her mistress had been thrown from her horse—perhaps killed ; but then,

unless Sir Filbut had been killed with her, he would certainly have brought home the body, or at least come to tell of the event. Another cause of perplexity was in the strange circumstance, that about midday a woman had called with a message from Dame Hewet, that Flora was to go upon some trifling errand, to a distant part of the city, and that this woman was to take the child with her to her mother, who, she said, was going some little distance into the country, and wished to give Anne a treat. The woman who came was so fair spoken, and such a kindly, motherly style of person, that no suspicion arising in the mind of Flora, the child was sent, and she herself went upon the errand for her mistress, but failed to find the place she had been directed to.

Osborne, whose mind was full of his own projects, paid much less attention to Flora's alarm than he otherwise would have done; and, indeed, he felt rather glad that his mistress was from home, as it saved him the necessity of inventing an excuse for quitting the house so late in the evening; when he did so, he did it with reluctance, not because he so much dreaded the business he was going upon, but that he felt it unkind to leave poor Flora Gray in the place alone, now she had pictured to her mind all sorts of coming horrors. It certainly was strange that his mistress should not have returned long ere that late hour; but still a few minutes, no doubt, would see her and her dear child, the little Anne; so leaving Flora gossiping with Alice Vaughan, the lantern maker's pretty daughter opposite, he placed his flat cap upon his head, and arming himself with his apprentice-club, sallied forth, under the fearful anticipation, that he was about to learn something strange, if not of dire import to his future fate.

The evening, which had commenced in beauty, was changing as the night began to close; the wind which had hitherto been sighing, and softly kissing the roses that lay in Flora's lap, came in angry gusts, then as

suddenly died away; lurid clouds, sailing for the south, were covering up the heavens, and Osborne fancied that more than once, he heard a murmuring, like the whispered voice of distant thunder; the few boats he met seemed to be hurrying homewards to escape the threatened hurricane; not a star was to be seen, and the whole sky was become one dark mass of storm-fraught clouds.

This unexpected change in the weather, added not a little to the unpleasant feelings which were rapidly taking possession of his mind; not a scene of horror that had lately passed, but now arose once more before his imagination with all the vivid colouring of a dream. Just as he was passing the very spot where the murder had been committed, sheets of fire illumined the entire skies, and peals of thunder came in rapid succession; then the clouds transforming themselves into a deluge, fell in torrents upon the earth. Every nerve was exerted by Osborne to carry his skiff quickly to the shore, but the winds were fierce against him, and more than once had nearly precipitated him headlong into the angry flood. At last he succeeded in driving his boat upon the shore, and jumping out, he secured it to a pole that stood near, and was about to bend his steps towards the hut, whose fire-lighted window pointed out the direction in which it lay, when, turning once more to assure himself that the boat was well secured, he raised his eyes, and stood aghast at finding he had fastened it to the shaft of a gibbet, from the arm of which hung down an iron cradle, upon whose ribs the lightning played so incessantly, that he plainly saw within it a human head, and as it swung towards him in the howling wind, he recognised the dreaded features of the Bully. It now recurred to his memory, that the Cripple had told him it was that morning to be placed up the marshes, as a warning to other evil doers. He hurried away, and was soon tapping at the witch's door.

"Come in, Edward Osborne," the old witch inside was heard to say; and at the same moment, the latch flew back with a sharp clink, and the door stood open. How it came so he was at a loss to guess, for the old woman was seated at some distance off, watching a pot that was hanging by a long hook over the fire, and had her back turned towards the door. Her knowledge, too, of whom it was that had sought her hut at such an unlikely hour, puzzled him a good deal, but it well prepared his mind to believe in her supernatural gifts. "Why have you loitered thus? The death-watch has ticked the tenth hour long ago; and think you that fate will tarry to suit the slothfulness of mortals?"

Edward closed the door, and advancing towards the fire, was struck by the painful expression of the old woman's face—the hand of fear seemed to have seized upon her whole frame, for she trembled in every limb—even the words she had already spoken had come falteringly from her mouth.

"Are you ill, good mother?" inquired Edward, kindly; "has my unexpected appearance terrified you?"

"*Thy appearance terrified me! Thy appearance unexpected! No, no! But I have cause for trembling, ample cause: we ask not questions of the white lips of death, without our own becoming blanched as well—we ask not the voice of the grave to speak to us, with its earthy breath, without our own breath faltering in its unhallowed task.*"

Here she took up a dead toad, and dropping it into the boiling pot, stirred it about, as her shrivelled lips appeared to be muttering some mystic charm.

Osborne's nerves were now so completely unstrung, that he had no longer power to reason upon what he saw or heard, but seemed to feel that he had unwisely placed himself entirely within the power of the beings of another world; he tried to offer up a prayer, but his memory flew away affrighted, and all

he could do, was to repeat again and again a parcel of unconnected words.

After a determined effort to subdue his nervous fear, he said—"Good mother, let me at once tell you my errand here, and then—"

"You may save your breath," said the old woman, interrupting him, "save your breath, for you may want it ere another hour be past; for, see, the toad sinks to the bottom—an evil sign, an evil sign! Besides, your errand is far better known to me than to thyself. Think you, that if I have the power of satisfying your longing to look into the glass of fate, that I should lack the power of knowing what impelled your curiosity? No, no! all is known to me—all is known to me! The charm is nearly wrought; when 'tis fully done, then ask me what you will, and I will answer." Here she once more stirred round the boiling pot, and once more her lips moved, as muttering a charm. "Tis done!" she said; then suddenly rising, placed a stick through the handle of the pot, and holding one end, she motioned to Edward to take the other, and thus between them they lifted the boiling cauldron off the hook by which it hung, and carried it towards the side of a wretched bed, which stood in a recess at the further end of the room. The flickering light of the fire alone illumed the miserable hovel, and threw deep shades from every thing that intercepted its uncertain rays.

Osborne started at seeing a figure moving near him—it was his own shadow on the wall. He b'ushed at his cowardice, and in a resolute tone expressed his impatience to learn his fate, be it good or evil.

"Thou wilt know it too soon, I fear. But take this egg, and from thine own height drop it into the boiling water—it will tell thy death."

Osborne would have rather learnt some more agreeable part of his destiny first, for it seemed to his mind unnatural to begin with the end; but being anxious now to bring his interview with the witch of

the marsh as speedily as he could to a termination, he did all he had been commanded, when the old woman, advancing with a firebrand in her hand, desired Osborne, by its aid, to look into the cauldron.

He did so, but started back, for the whole water had become the colour of blood.—“What means this change?” said Edward, in a faltering voice.

“That thy death will be a bloody one; and as the egg which held thy doom has burst so soon, it will be as speedy as ’tis bloody!”

“Witch, or fiend, or devil!” said Edward—“be you one or all, I’ll put your soothsaying to the proof, or I will swear away your life, and have you burnt in Smithfield, for the witch you pretend to be! The cause of my coming here was a command from the dead: if you possess, in truth, your vaunted power, call up again the vision that haunted me in the midnight chapel!”

“And would you dare to look upon that form again?” said the old woman, trembling.

“I would,” replied Osborne, “and from his dead lips learn the truth or falsity of your prediction.”

“Be warned in time!” the old woman exclaimed.

“Impostor! trifle no more!” Osborne said savagely.

“Then thus of thy blood I wash my hands.” As she uttered these words, she moved her hands about, one over the other, as if in the act of washing them, and then continued—“Take that burning brand in thy right hand, and with thy left remove the coverlid from off yonder bed.”

She had pronounced this sentence with such evident self-belief in her own powers, that Osborne hesitated for a moment to fulfil her injunctions; but sneering at his own credulity, he seized the brand, and tearing the tattered clothes from off the bed, stood transfixed with horror, for there he saw the body of the Blear-eyed Bully, lying as though he had been again in life.

“Wilt thou ask thy fate of *him*?” demanded the old woman, in a voice trembling with emotion.

"No, no—I dare not!" Osborne replied, as he fell sinking to the earth.

"Then learn it unasked!" exclaimed a voice. The figure rose up suddenly, and in another instant Osborne found himself within an iron grasp. Two men, or fiends, he knew not which, rushed from behind the bed, and before he had the power to collect a single thought, they bound him hand and foot, and he was powerless; the old woman had fallen dead or senseless upon the ground.

So suddenly had all the latter portion of this strange scene occurred, that Edward fancied he must be in a dream; but he was soon made sensible of the reality of his awful position.

"Fool!" said the ghost, for such Osborne still found it difficult to persuade himself it was not; "and did a boy like you dream of playing with the lives of men, and think that none were living to avenge the dead? I am the twin-brother of him you brought to death, and I am his twin in mind as well as in form and feature. When I learnt that it was to you and to your master the payment for his death was due, I formed my plans. I had, at first, intended to have followed you wherever you went, in these habiliments in which my other self perished—to have dogged your steps at every turn, and by making your life a hell on earth, by the supposition that a dead man was ever lying in your path, have driven you by torturing degrees to hopeless madness: for your master, I had other schemes—but my plans are changed. It is now my intention to bind you face to face to the head that at this moment swings in the night breeze from the gibbet by the water's edge, and there let you hang by the neck till you are dead."

"Monster!" exclaimed Edward, "you will not dare to put your horrid threat into execution; and if you would, these men, if men they be, cannot stand by and see so bloody a crime committed."

"Ha, ha, poor boy!" the other replied; "open your

eyes and gaze upon them well: you have met before—the murderers of the weaver; those who assisted then are not the most likely to withhold a helping hand in such a trifle as a baby's death. Come, away with him! Don't be afraid that you shall die too soon; 'give and take' is our maxim. You provided a lingering death for my brother—his brother shall find a lingering one for you. You shall suffer drowning a dozen times before we hang you up to die."

The other two wretches now hurried with Osborne borne between them, struggling with all the might his bound limbs could muster; he screamed out murder with all the strength despair could bring him, but his cries were only answered by the mocking wind and laughter of those who had him so completely in their power. They threw him into the water; he struggled hard, but they held him down until they believed him nearly dead; then drew him forth, and laid him on the ground until he should recover consciousness sufficient to endure a second death. They all sat down beneath the gibbet to watch him. The storm of thunder and lightning had passed away; the wind still howled as loudly as ever, but its violence broke up the clouds into large masses, which rolling away in awful grandeur, let in the moonlight, which, for the time, rendered all around as clear as day. "Do you hear him breathe?" said the brother of the Bully; to which the other answered, "Who can hear anything, with such a bellowing wind as this? I wish you'd let us hang him up at once, for see, he moves."

"Well, do as you like," said the first speaker, "he will make a pretty example, and a glorious warning to other meddling apprentices, when he is found hanging here in the morning. Oh! it's turned desperately cold," he added, as he seemed to be seized with a fit of ague; "the sooner the work be ended, the better, for I must get something to warm me now. Slip this noose over his neck, and let us haul him up at once." As he said this, he rose up, and threw an end of a rope

over the arm of the gibbet, as the other men were fixing the noose round the neck of the affrighted Osborne, who had recovered full consciousness of his dreadful situation. He gave all the resistance his helpless state would allow, and endeavoured again to scream aloud. The bank on which he lay was very steep; just as they had succeeded in fixing the rope about his neck, he drew his knees up almost to his chin, then, with a desperate effort, sent out his legs so suddenly, that one of his murderers was cast headlong down the bank into the water; the other two rushed to his rescue, but the tide was so strongly running round the projecting point of the land, that it carried him out of his depth. Not being able to swim, he called aloud for help.

"Run and untie the boat," said the principal of the wretches; the other hastened to the gibbet and did as he was told, while the Blear-eyed Bully's twin-brother, jumping into the boat, pushed off to the rescue of his companion. He had scarcely accomplished the task, when the man at the gibbet ran frantically to the water's edge, and madly called upon them to return, and take him aboard the boat. As the boat touched the shore, and the man placed his foot upon it, a loud shout of voices was heard near at hand. "Away, away," he said, "or we are lost! See yonder crowd running hither; pull for your lives, pull, pull!" The boat in which the murderous wretches now found means to escape, was the one Osborne had come in.

The crowd that came running and shouting toward him was composed principally of peasants, some armed with sticks, spades, and brooms, and others with pitchforks, upon the points of which they had hung lanterns, to hold high up in the air, as signals that aid was approaching. What was Osborne's astonishment to observe that the throng was headed by the Cripple of the Bridge-gate Tower. Another surprise was to observe the peasants carrying the witch upon their shoulders, and at the same moment to find his bonds

being loosened by his faithful, humble friend, Billy-the-Bridge-shooter ! Osborne was soon conveyed back again to the hut ; dry clothes were put on him, which were speedily collected, part from one, part from another, of the bystanders, so that, as he sat by the replenished fire, he looked anything but the comely lad he really was. The old woman, too, was paid great attention to by the peasants, who really did believe her to be a witch, for, as they said, " who was it gave them such good crops, if it was not her charms ? "

An explanation of the means of Osborne's almost miraculous delivery was soon entered upon, by which it appeared that the Cripple of the Bridge, imagined that some trick, but not of a serious nature, was to be played off upon Edward, for the sake of frightening him, and nothing more ; but not admiring these practical jokes, it was his intention to be present at the game, and if it turned out as he expected, namely, that a parcel of apprentice boys were to be the actors, he would frighten them in turn, and lay his staff soundly about their shoulders. For this purpose, he had gone to the marshes some time before Osborne was to arrive there : the night became tempestuous, so much so, that he gave up all idea of Edward's coming ; he sheltered himself in a little-out house, or shed near the hut. At last he saw, by the lightning's aid, Osborne at the door of the hovel. When he had gone in, the Cripple took to his station at the casement, to which there was no shelter, and through which he saw all that passed.

He said—" He must own he had become intensely interested by the scene, up to the bursting forth of the three ruffians, when his wonder changed to alarm for Edward's safety : he knew that his own single power was of no avail, so that when the murderers were dragging Edward from the hut, he hurried away to seek for aid : not knowing the marshes, he lost himself amongst the ditches and dikes ; and then to his horror, found himself again near the hut ; but this was

the saving of the youth's life, for here he met the old woman, with feeble steps, trying to hurry away for aid ; she pointed out the only road to the neighbouring village, where he soon arrived, and was immediately on his return with the whole village at his heels."

It appeared by the old woman's account, that three ruffians had come to her hut, and after beating and torturing her, they swore they would drag out her tongue, roast it, and make her eat it ; they would then tear out her eyes ; and last of all, they would set her upon her own fire, and burn her to death, if she did not do all they commanded. They placed themselves in such positions, that not only could they hear every word she said, but also see, whether by look or sign, she should attempt to give Osborne the least warning of his dreadful fate. She said the dead toad and the egg, that seemed to change the water to blood, were brought by one of the men, whom she guessed, from what fell from their lips, to be one of the conjurors who attended the fairs, and cheated the poor people out of their pence.

"Vell, mother," said Billy-the-bridge-shooter, "I do hope now you vill give up your darling vitchcraft ; you vosn't made for a vitch, you vosn't ; upon my life you vosn't ; and you never can be a vitch as long as you lives !"

The poor old woman hung down her head, and seemed to be thinking that her son was, very likely, not far from right, but said nothing.

Edward Osborne's clothes being now thoroughly dried, and finding himself wonderfully invigorated by a famous supper, he determined to hurry home, late as it was.

The Bridge-shooter insisted upon his mother removing at once into the neighbouring village ; "for he was not going to have her murdered there, to please her, or anybody else."

In those days, the furniture in most houses was of no great extent ; use was more studied then, than

ornament. Our forefathers' feet were well satisfied to tread upon the plain boards; or, if a little gentility must be assumed, a few rushes answered all the purposes of a modern velvet-piled carpet; and as for linen, we may presume there was no great stock kept, that commodity being generally manufactured upon the premises, excepting the finer sorts, and those were imported from abroad, which made them rather too costly to be in common use. If the general run of furniture was thus simple in really decent dwellings, it will not be surprising that, but a few minutes sufficed for the packing of the whole household stuffs belonging to the witch of the marsh.

Each of the party carrying a portion, they were soon ready 'to run away by the light of the moon,' which they speedily did.

The Bridge-shooter carried the old bedstead and bedding and all, which was no very heavy load, the old woman, the Cripple, and Edward, managed the rest, and thus they trudged along towards the village. They had not proceeded many hundred yards, before the old woman started so suddenly, that the whole party had nearly let all the things fall in alarm.

"Heavens!" she exclaimed, "where is my spirit—where is my spirit? I'll not go without my spirit."

"Vot, you're at your vitchery again, mother, are you?" said her son.

The old woman made no answer, but was at once turning back, when she was arrested by her "spirit," crying "mew, mew!" It turned out to be a large old black cat, that had followed them from the hut, and which the old woman sincerely believed was a spirit that could tell her all the wonders of the hidden world, although it must be confessed it had never told her anything yet, and perhaps never would. The ancient dame took up the old cat, who purring, nestled in her bosom, and on again the party trudged. The old woman was comfortably lodged in the village, and the other three started off towards Old London Bridge.

As they journeyed along, the conversation naturally turned upon the recent occurrences, and Billy-the-bridge-shooter began to moralise upon the old adage of "a man that is born to be hanged, will never be drowned." "That's uncommon true," said he, "but then the rascals vonted to leave you not no choice at all, for they would have hanged and drowned you too if they could. Now to-night has proved to me, that there is a third chance left for us all—and that is—even a man is born to die in his bed, he'll never be hanged nor drowned neither."

"Why, friend," said the Cripple of the Bridge-gate-tower, "you're quite a philosopher."

"So mother says," replied the lad, "she often calls me a philisossifer; and vy do you think she calls me by that rum name? Vy, because I sometimes speaks a little bit of truth!—vot nonsense, isn't it? Vy, if it only vonted to tell truths to be one on 'em, I vunders all the vurld are not philisossifers."

"Because," replied the Cripple, "the greater part of the world finds it a difficult task to speak the truth."

"I think," said the Bridge-shooter, "it's a precioua deal more difficulter to tell lies. I find it so, I know. Vy, truth slips out so smooth and easy; vun never has to think about that; but ven you've got to tell a lie, my viskers! haven't you got to think of a lot of other things as vell, only to keep you from being found out."

"Now Villy," he continued, addressing the Cripple, "vot is your advice in this matter? vot course think you will be the best, I mean the safest for us all? If ve make a stir about to-night's business, ve shall get the whole of Alsatia, and the Clink into the bargain, about our ears. I think, as Master Edward is safe now, the lesa we says about the business the better. 'A silent tongue makes a vise head,' as an old rip that I knows always says, ven he don't von't you to tell of his rogueries."

"For the present," replied the Cripple of the Bridge-gate-tower, "you are right. It is only a fool who lets the spring go, until he is sure the rat is in the trap. Besides, there are more wheels at work, than those we see; by letting this one turn on, and watching carefully, we may find a way of stopping the whole at once."

"How strangely," said Osborne, "does man's life at times suddenly vary, and upon such mere chances too. Until these last few weeks, I was a simple plodding apprentice, with not a care to trouble me—when all at once, I find myself in the centre of a whirlpool of dangers. There is one thing I have never yet been able to account for, that is, the mystery which has always surrounded the circumstance of my good master being warned of the danger, which we now know was no groundless fancy, that threatened me when he sent me to Putney, and kept me there secluded until the eve of the trial of the robber Miles."

"Ha, ha! ho, ho! he, he!——" screeched the Cripple; "how simple do mighty things appear, when the veil of mystery be removed; and yet it seemed like fate that sent the chance to me."

"You!" exclaimed Edward and the Bridge-shooter at the same time, as they looked inquiringly at the Cripple.

"Yes," he replied, "it was I who warned your master. On the night of May-day, at the dearest hour of that night, I was restless, and wandered about the Bridge; when, seeing two lurking figures approaching my tower, I entered, extinguished my lamp, and was about to fall upon my couch once more, when my ear caught the sound of voices close to the little casement in my tower wall. 'We shall have him safe enough there,' said one. I started up, and placing my ear close to the opening of the window, heard enough to tell me the plot that was laid against you, and all about the letter recommending that you should be sent to Woolwich. It was I who wrote the

note which may be said to have saved your life; it was I who instructed the boy to deliver it as he did; and I, too, it was, who sent for the Bridge-shooter; but he knew not from whom the message and money came."

Osborne expressed his wonder, and also his gratitude. Little more occurred of any consequence until they reached the Bridge.

When they arrived there, the Cripple took out a large key from his pouch, and opening the door of the Bridge-gate tower, bade his companions a right good night, and entered, while Osborne and the Bridge-shooter continued their way across the Bridge to the merchant's house. Arrived there, Osborne was surprised and alarmed at seeing lights moving from room to room. He knocked loudly. The door was opened by Flora Gray, who was crying bitterly.

"What has happened?" exclaimed Edward, whose alarm was now greatly increased.

"Oh! oh! oh! oh!" was the only answer the broken-hearted girl could utter.

"For Heaven's sake, Flora, speak! speak! what has happened?"

"Oh, oh, oh!" again sobbed the poor girl, at the same time pointing with her fore-finger to the rooms above.

Osborne, comprehending her meaning, started up stairs, and hurrying into the front apartment, was amazed to find his master sitting there, apparently lost in grief. "Master! dear master!" exclaimed Osborne, "what, in Heaven's name, has happened?"

"I know not," replied his master, taking a deep-drawn breath. "My wife—my Alyce—and my poor child!" His utterance became choked, and burying his face within his two hands, his head sank upon the table near which he sat.

Osborne felt that at that moment he ought not to press his master upon the cause of his grief; so again hurried down, and learnt from the Bridge-shooter, who had succeeded in making Flora explain, by

words, mixed up with sobs and tears, all she knew, which, indeed, was very little, in fact, nothing further than Osborne himself was aware of.

"No, no!" said Flora; "I know what my own opinion is, but that I shall keep to myself: I'll not let my tongue ruin any poor soul breathing—no, I'd rather have it torn out first!"

"Good Heavens!" exclaimed Edward, his thoughts being turned into a new train, by what Flora had said, "good Heavens! I will never believe that such purity ——"

"That's what master says," replied Flora, sobbing. "He believes she's dead, and won't hear a word against her."

Osborne, whose suspicions were aroused, called to mind many circumstances, mere trifles in themselves, yet all tending to confirm his worst fears. He at once determined to have these fears resolved. He sent off the Bridge-shooter to several places, where it was just possible some tidings of his mistress might be obtained, while he himself hurried away, without hinting at where he was going, straight to the lodgings of Sir Filbut Fussy.

When he arrived there, notwithstanding the day had not yet broken, he found persons busily employed, carrying away chests and trunks; and when he inquired whether Sir Filbut was there, they told him they believed he had gone abroad, and that all his things, with the exception of the few they were then taking to the wharf, had sailed several days before for Italy. Sadly, indeed, did he return to the merchant's house; but here, if a doubt yet lingered in his still-hoping mind, he learnt that which annihilated doubt and hope together.

While Osborne had been away, Flora was occupied in prying about every corner of her mistress's room, hoping to discover some clue to the mysterious cause of her mistress's absence. At last, in the corner of the hearth, in which a fire had recently been burn-

ing, she found several pieces of a torn letter, some of them partially consumed and discoloured by the flames, others blotted, as if by tears, yet leaving sufficient words plain enough to reveal the real nature of the writing. These words were of the most ardent and passionate nature, breathing unalterable affection for her to whom they were addressed; who that might be, for some time remained uncertain, until again raking over the ashes, two more pieces, nearly consumed, were found; on one the name of "Alyce" could clearly be decyphered, on the other the initials "F. F."

Flora could not conceal her discovery for a single moment, but with the damning evidence, rushed into the presence of her master, just as Edward and the Bridge-shooter had entered.

When the merchant was told what she had found, and he cast his eyes upon the fatal words, in characters he knew full well, he, with the fragments firmly clenched within his two uplifted hands, threw himself with violence upon his knees, and looking towards heaven, his lips moved, but those around heard not what he said: was it a prayer he offered? or was it a blighting curse he then called down from Heaven?

CHAPTER X.

A LESSON IN PRONUNCIATION.

The God of Love, ah, *benedicite!*
How mighty and how great a lord is he!
Against his might there gainen none obstacles;
He may be 'clep'd a God for his miracles,
For he can make at his owen guise
Of every heart, as that him list devise.—CHAUCER.

One of them was blind, and might not see.—IBID.

DAY after day passed by, but still no tidings of either Alyce or her child. And although the good merchant, in external appearance, seemed but as a sedate and thoughtful man, there was within his breast a hidden

serpent, ever gnawing at his heart. Hewet's love for his wife has been of that all-absorbing nature—that he had had but one thought, one hope from the moment they had plighted their vows, and that hope, that thought, was for the happiness of his Alyce.

In exact proportion to his former unbounded confidence, now came the bitterness of finding himself deceived. Every incident of his wedded life flitted before his heated imagination, as he, night after night, lay upon his sleepless couch; but in no one of his wakeful dreams could he ever picture to himself a single look, or bring to his remembrance a single word, that had ever passed from the eyes or lips of his adored Alyce, that should have raised a blush upon her cheek, or have blanched his own. But the more these reflections crowded upon his mind, the more violent became his resentment against one, whose consummate art could so cloak her vile feelings beneath the guise of sincerity, that no eye, but the one she wished to do so, could ever penetrate her designs. Could such proficiency in deceit be drawn from a pure heart in an instant, as by a spell? or was this perfection of duplicity the slow growth of long continued habit? He feared the latter; and then the remembrance of his every act of former kindness to her he had loved and trusted, would bring a blush upon his cheek, for having been such a weak confiding dupe. He soon persuaded himself, or believed he had done so, that the only grief he now suffered, was for the loss of his child.

"Why had the wretch," he muttered, "stolen away the only consolation she could have left me? Was it the overpowering love a mother might feel for her offspring? Banish the impious thought! What mother, loving her child, could bring upon that child the stain of infamy, that its parent's guilt must stamp upon its future life, if that life were to be passed with one revelling in vice and shame. Oh, no! hatred to him alone could account for the wicked act." As he was about to call upon Heaven to blast her with its

Just vengeance, he raised his eyes and encountered the innocent features of Alyce in a picture, which had been painted by the great Holbein, and which was regarded as one of the most perfect specimens of his art. The sight, added to the recollection of the happiness which he believed to have been his own, when that picture was painted, completely overcame him, and he wept aloud.

Young Osborne, who was ever on the watch, fearful of the turn his master's grief might take, hurried into the apartment.

"Tear it from the wall!" exclaimed Hewet, covering his eyes with one hand, as with the other he pointed to the portrait of his wife, "tear it from the wall—cut it into shreds with your dagger—burn it to ashes—or cast it deep into the flood—do anything with it, so that you utterly destroy that lying semblance of a fiend in angel's form!"

Osborne could not resist heaving a sigh, as he looked upon the heavenly features of Alyce; but knowing that at that moment it were better not to combat the commands of his agitated master, he hurried away with the picture, promising its immediate destruction.

After this last paroxysm of the merchant's despair, no mortal eye ever again witnessed his distress. His whole mind was henceforth, to all appearance, bound up in his worldly affairs; but inwardly there was a powerful spring at work, which drew into one focus every action; this was, his secret determination to be revenged upon the ungrateful cause of all his sorrow—in fact, to discover, and to kill his wife. To such a pitch of madness had he wrought himself, that in order that his child should never fall as her mother had, his next intention was to bestow the whole of his wealth, and it was already vast, upon some nunnery, with the condition that she should ever be kept from the eyes of men.

Did he fulfil these insane fantasies?—the book of fate is not yet opened to reveal.

From all the information that had hitherto been

obtained, it was pretty evident that the course the fugitives had taken, was towards Italy. Hewet, therefore, under pretence of the King's service, now he had become his Grace's merchant, requiring that he should visit Milan and Venice, in order to select the most costly stuffs, and finest gold work that the world could then produce, obtained permission, and safe conducts, by the King's grace, to enable him to pass through the various states he must traverse, with speed, and tolerable security. Taking advantage of one of his own ships, at that moment about to sail for the Adriatic, he hurriedly prepared for his long and perilous journey. Osborne was placed in full authority at the dwelling upon the Bridge. His other affairs he left in equally trusty hands; then, with a heart sustained against an almost insupportable pressure of grief, merely by the unholy stimulant, a thirst for vengeance, the merchant hastened upon his melancholy way.

Osborne, as might be supposed, his master being away, and the whole weight of the concern resting upon his shoulders, had enough to do, without spending much time upon Billy the Bridge-shooter, who was now regularly domesticated in the merchant's house. But as Osborne was not one to form a good intention and not carry it out, he begun seriously to think upon some means of getting the youth a proper master.

It turned out oddly enough, that the master he chose proved to be a mistress. She had herself been a pupil of Osborne, and had, for those days, become a very fair scholar. She could read and write uncommonly well; as to figures she was not very great; she seemed to think that it was quite enough for girls to do to study their own figures; and the only arithmetic required by the fair sex was the first rule in Hyman's arithmetic, where, strange to say, one added to one only makes one. The reader will doubtless guess, without much difficulty, that the fair instructress chosen by Edward Osborne for the guide of Billy the Bridge-shooter, was pretty Flora Gray. For a long time did she

despair of making any impression upon his "stupid head," as she called it; slow progress at the commencement of his academical labours, arose from a feeling of shame at "a great man"—for youths think themselves great men at a very early age—"being instructed to read and write by a little girl." But he very soon began to discover, like Lord Byron, that fair lips, of all instructors of languages, are the very best. The two great stumbling-blocks over which he fell and rolled about in the most admired confusion, were the W's and V's! "Now, it is a very odd thing," as Flora sagaciously observed, "that all uneducated people should find any difficulty in pronouncing these two letters in their *proper* places, while they do it with perfect ease when placed where they ought not to be."

"But I can't, and I never shall be able to get over those two horrid little letters," said the Bridge-shooter, with a look of utter despair.

"Nonsense," replied Flora; "now try — say water!"

"Vorter!" roared out the Bridge-shooter.

"Now say virtue," continued Flora, looking very grave.

"Wirtue!" said the Bridge-shooter.

"There, you see; you find no difficulty in pronouncing the *letters*, only you will put them in the wrong places: adorn your virtue with a V, and pop your W into the water, and we shall get on swimmingly."

The poor Bridge-shooter screwed about his lips in all sorts of ridiculous shapes, ere he ventured upon VIRTUE, and when it did come, the V was about half a yard long; for, having once caught hold of it, he seemed but little inclined to relinquish so valuable an acquisition. "V—e—e—e—e—hirtue!" said he, with a jerk, and then took a long-drawn breath, as if completely overcome by the effort he had made.

"Excellent, excellent, excellent, indeed," said Flora, with an encouraging smile. So delighted was the

poor Bridge-shooter with this, his first conquest over so formidable a foe, that "virtue" henceforth was for ever in his mouth, and, we are delighted to add, in his heart too. He got over the WATER with much less difficulty; here he seemed more in his element, and by following the same process of elongation, wor—or—or—or—ter flowed on brilliantly, and he was again encouraged by Flora's pretty smile. After their lessons, which generally took place an hour before sunset, in the pretty room behind the upper balcony, overlooking the river, their conversation always reverted to the strange and wicked conduct of Alyce Hewet. One evening William, for now Flora never allowed him to be called by such a vulgar title as Billy-the-bridge-shooter, observed, "Although I knows—"

"Know," said Flora.

"Know," said William.

"Yes," said Flora.

"Know," said William. "Although I *know* that mother is not a vitch—I mean witch, sometimes it is werry, very, odd that she does stumble upon most extraordinary things. Now I vunder, wonder, whether she could by her conjurations, as she calls them, find out for us what has really become of Dame Hewet and the child. Shall we go and see the poor old soul, and ask her? You know this is the eve of St. John, and you have promised that I shall take you about to see all the gay sights to-night."

Poor Flora felt a sigh rising from the very bottom of her heart, for she remembered that another used formerly to take her out upon such occasions; but she checked it, and smiling upon her pupil, said, "I never forget my promises, mind your remember yours. If you make one mistake in the verb you have promised to learn, dread my power." What this verb was, we shall by and by explain; but he had already learnt it by heart; so he felt perfectly easy upon that score.

The eve of St. John the Baptist, in our City's olden time, was an epoch of vast interest to our forefathers.

The great muster of all the watches of the City took place then; feasting, bonfires, and revelries of all kinds flourished to an enormous extent. Many of the houses were covered from top to bottom with green birch, long fennel, and a prodigious quantity of St. John's wort, orpine, white lilies, and garlands of beautiful flowers; the street was thronged with people busily employed rolling tar-barrels along to the appointed spots where the bonfires were to be displayed. From Aldgate, without the walls, or ramparts, extending to Bishopsgate, lay a filthy ditch called, as the spot is to this day, Houndsditch. A low mud wall divided it from the main road, on the other side of which were a number of small cottages, with little plots of garden ground attached to them, all beyond being open country, including Spitalfields, then a charming rural Sunday walk, greatly frequented by the citizens; and it was towards these cottages that Flora and the Bridge-shooter were now making their way. These cottages were inhabited by poor bedridden people, who were to be seen lying in their beds close to the open windows, which were purposely made very low, in order that the inmates might be easily viewed by the passers by. On the window-sill was spread a clean white napkin, upon which lay a cross and beads, to indicate that the afflicted could now do nought but pray. It was the custom of the affluent upon holidays, and many other occasions, particularly on Fridays, to stroll out this way, and add somewhat to the soul's health, by relieving the wants of their poor afflicted fellow-creatures. In consequence of the ill-usage, and the dreadful fright the Bridge-shooter's mother had experienced on the night when the murder of Edward Osborne had been attempted, she had been seized by a succession of violent fits, which ended in paralysis of the greater portion of her body. Master Hewet's interest had been exerted in her behalf, and she was now settled for the rest of her days in one of those charitably-bestowed cottages. As the Bridge-shooter

and Flora Gray entered Houndsditch from Aldgate, William was surprised, on looking towards his mother's cottage, to see before her door a splendid retinue, composed of some twenty gentlemen all in bright harness, and mounted on magnificent horses. Two running pages were holding the bridle of a superb charger, the saddle of which was then vacant. Before he and his pretty companion had proceeded many paces, a youth, gorgeously attired, came from the cottage, and mounting the charger, led the way, followed by the twenty horsemen. As they passed by, the Bridge-shooter had an opportunity of regarding the youth very minutely, for, on seeing Flora was a pretty girl, the youth kissed his hand to her, and seemed inclined to make a ha't, which caused a dreadful frown from the poor Bridge-shooter, who was very much annoyed to observe that Flora, instead of being terribly angry, as he thought she ought to have been, raised her head higher than ever, and seemed to regard his notice as anything but disagreeable.

"I knew you were coming, boy, I knew you were coming," said the mother.

"Well, but I don't think that very wonderful, mother," he replied, "considering I come every day."

"Shall I never convince you that I am gifted to know every event before it happens?"

"I should like to be convinced of that," said the lad, "above all things, and, in fact, I've come to-night on purpose to put your boasted foresight to the test; but before I tell you what I've come about, you must tell me, if you do know everything:—here he made a motion with his hand behind him to Flora Gray to kept out of sight—"just you tell me who it is that I have brought with me?"

"Flora Gray," replied the old woman, unhesitatingly.

The fact was, that in the glass window she saw the reflection of Flora Gray standing behind her son; this little natural aid to her magic she kept secret to her-

self; but her reply had an enormous effect in shaking her son's doubts regarding her supernatural powers.

"Hang me, if you're not right, mother," said the Bridge-shooter, drawing Flora forward, "and if you can tell us what we wish to know, as truly as you have hit upon this, I'll swear you're a witch to the last day of my life, 'though they should burn us both for saying so. But I say, mother, who was that insolent stripling who just left you?"

"One," said the old dame, "who has more faith in a witch's words than her own flesh and blood has; he has gone away in the full belief of my secret influence over the spirits of another world—he came for knowledge, and I gave it to him—but let that pass—let that pass—'tis useless to try and persuade a stone." Saying this she looked very angrily at her son.

Flora softened the old dame wonderfully, by professing implicit belief in the power of witchcraft; and even the Bridge-shooter, at times, felt his disbelief terribly shaken, by the chance hits she was fortunate enough to make.

As all other attempts to discover the fates of Alyce, and the child had failed, he thought there could be no harm, in just pleasing his old mother so far, as to ask her aid. Flora told the old woman the cause of their visit, but the old dame pretended to know it all beforehand, and said she had been nearly the whole day trying with the cards to discover the truth.

"Every time I open this book of fate," she said, taking up a pack of cards, and spreading them out on the bed before her, "there do I find the Queen of Hearts, meaning dame Alyce."——

"She was indeed the Queen of Hearts, of all hearts, until this sad affair," said Flora, sighing.

"Before her is a knave, and behind her is another; this is the twentieth time they have fallen in the same position—the Knave of Diamonds and the Knave of Clubs."

"Oh," said Flora, "the Knave of Diamonds is

plain enough, that means the wicked Sir Filbut, who has caused us all our trouble——”

“And himself some, too,” said the old woman, “for see, he’s turned upside down, and standing upon his head; but who know you that would answer to the Knave of Clubs?”

“If they were ’prentice clubs,” exclaimed William, “I should say it means Harry Horton.”

Poor Flora blushed at hearing the Bridge-shooter speak thus slightly of one she had regarded with tenderness, but even she had begun to have her suspicions as to his true character, but she ventured to say, “That it was impossible *he* could have had aught to do with Sir Filbut’s wickedness, for there had been moments when she really believed that Harry was more than half in love with dame Alyce himself.”

“Was he, girl?” enquired the would-be witch; “yet the cards speak as much, and they never deceive; but enough for one night—enough for one night. As you re-enter the city, do so by the Postern Gate, the road to it will lead you past the Nunnery of the Minorites; ask for the blind girl, Eoline, and give her this little wooden cross; she well knows my meaning. I have seen strange things in the clouds to-day; tell Edward Osborne, on his life not to be away from home to-morrow; he is sought by those who may smooth the rough road he has to follow for many and many a year to come; remember, the strange visitor to Edward Osborne will visit him to-morrow—there is much will happen soon—much, much, much!”

“Mother says much,” observed the Bridge-shooter to Flora, as they took their way back again, “but we have not gained *much* for our trouble.”

“But what can she want,” said Flora, “of the blind beauty of the nunnery; surely one brought up in such a holy place can have nothing in common with witchcraft.”

"I don't know that," replied the Bridge-shooter, "there are strange stories getting about, concerning all sorts of men, particularly the nuns of St. Clair. Some say they are no better than they should be, or, rather, not quite so good as they ought to be. But never mind such useless things as nuns, and if you will let me, I will just run through the verb you last set me."

"What verb?" enquired Flora; "I have quite forgotten which it was."

"The verb—*to love*!" answered William, with a peculiar expression, though he imagined it was a verb that could be conjugated by the eyes alone. "It begins, *I love*. Oh, Flora, I wish I dared add one little pro—pro—noun, I think you say it is, to the present tense of that verb—and then I'd say—I—love *you*!"

"For shame, William," said Flora; "we must give up our studies if you talk thus; and know, sir, that I do *not* love *you*, nor do I ever intend to do so."

"I know all that, Flora," replied the Bridge-shooter, "nor do I ask you to do it. All I crave is to be allowed to love *you*, not because you are pretty, for every one could love you for that, but because you are good and kind to those who require your smile and aid. These, Flora, are the things that make me love you—not your pretty face or pretty form."

Now, if the poor Bridge-shooter had studied the sex for a thousand years, he could not have hit upon a method more likely to win the good esteem of her he wooed, than the one he was pursuing. While denying that he loved her for her beauty, he was still covertly telling her how beautiful he thought her; and yet, even that beauty was nothing to be compared to the amiability he discovered hidden beneath it. One thing alone was wanting to make the Bridge-shooter's success complete, and chance almost immediately filled up the measure of his hopes, for just after Flora's heart had been powerfully assailed by

the youth at her side, whom should they meet but Harry Horton, now splendidly attired, arm in arm with a man much older than himself, but equally gay in his habiliments. The elder was a tall powerful man, whose face was nearly hidden by a profusion of whiskers, beard, and long moustache. Flora's old feelings for Horton for one instant filled her breast, and she made an impulsive start forward to meet her former flatterer; but he, looking her full in the face, seemed not to know one so humble in station, and turning his head away, passed on. The man of whiskers and of beard had started too, but his was a start of that nature which we make at suddenly finding ourselves in presence of the last person we would have met. He fixed his dark protruding eyes upon the Bridge-shooter, and scowling fiercely upon him, vanished with Horton in the crowd. So astonished had the Bridge-shooter been at seeing a perfect stranger, as he thought him, gaze at him thus, that he had not heeded the agitation which Horton's contemptuous slight of poor Flora had thrown her into. She looked after her false lover, and felt as though she could have sunk into the earth for very shame at herself, for ever having thought of such a worthless wretch. To hide the mortification she really felt, she put on an air of exaggerated mirth, and laughed quite loudly at the idea of such "a magpie," as she called Horton, "strutting about in his peacock's feathers." But, poor soul! when she returned to her own chamber, she gave way to one long bitter flood of tears, and Horton was torn from her heart for ever.

When they arrived at the Convent of the Minories, they learnt that Eoline, the blind girl, had gone to fulfil her usual evening duty, by carrying small cakes and flowers from the nunnery farm to the poor bed-ridden people of the Houndsditch cottages. Upon these errands of charity she was usually accompanied by her brother, as she called him, Willy, the Cripple

of the Bridge-gate tower. Now, Eoline was fair—fair as blooming May, and the Cripple had eyes to see and feel that fairness; but Eoline was blind, born blind, and could not see her friend's deformities; she saw but his kindness through the eyes within her heart, and that to her was beautiful. Oft would she say, as they strolled along together, "I wonder, to those who have what you call sight, what the difference can be between ugliness and beauty?"

"The difference between myself and you," the Cripple would reply; "the difference between a devil and an angel!"

"Hush!" said Eoline, trembling; "know you the meaning of the words you utter? No, Willy, no. The wicked spirits, they tell me, are all deformity, because they *are* wicked; you are all goodness, at least to me; you, therefore, cannot be deformed, whatever our ugly nuns may say—I call *them* ugly because they are always unkind to me, and quarrel with each other—so you see I know, Willy, what ugliness really is, although I have no eyes; do I not?"

"Poor child!" said the Cripple, "you will never know what real ugliness is, for you will never see me."

"I see you often," was her innocent reply, "often and often. You never sing but I see you in my ears; and oh, you are so lovely!"

"Oh, oh! ha, ha! he, he——!" laughed the Cripple, at hearing himself thus flattered.

"Oh, do not do that!" ejaculated the blind girl, placing her hands upon her ears; "you frighten me when you do that. It seems as if another being were standing by, a wicked one, scoffing at me for my poor blind folly, in saying the foolish things I do. But I am blind, Willy, blind—and it seems to me that all wisdom lies in the eyes, not in the brain; so do not scoff at me for want of wisdom—I was born blind."

The poor Cripple felt that he would cut out his tongue rather than again utter that discordant laugh; and although he knew he had to fight against all-

powerful nature, yet he determined to combat till he conquered—such are the wild achievements love will make mankind attempt.

Flora and the Bridge-shooter left the cross for Eoline with the portress at the convent gate, and as the night was fast setting in, they moved quickly forward to enter the city by the postern gate; they strolled through Tower-street, now gaily lighted up, then into Escheppe (Eastcheap), gayer still, which brought them soon to Fish-street, now a scene of perfect magnificence. The standing watch were taking their stations, all habited in bright harness, looking like burnished men of silver, from the reflection of the bonfires, roaring at the corner of every street. At every door, that is, of the richer citizens, was placed a table, well supplied with sweet bread and goodly drinks, the worthy owners inviting their neighbours, and strangers passing by, to come and sit awhile in unconstrained familiarity, to make merry, and praise God for the benefits he had bestowed upon them. The great event of the evening, however, was the procession of "THE MARCHING WATCH," and a magnificent procession it was. It passed from the little Conduit at Paule's Gate to West Cheape, then by the Stocks through Cornhill, by Leadenhall to Aldgate, then back down Fenchurch-street, by Grasse Church, about Grasse-Church Conduit, and up Grasse-Church Street into Cornhill, and thence into West Cheape again.

Many were the tables placed without the doors, at which the Bridge-shooter and his fair companion were compelled to take their seats, now beside some princely merchant's dame, now by a wandering friar or a beggar; for on St. John's eve all were supposed to be friends and equals, and none, without offence, could refuse the invitation proffered.

When Flora and her new lover had completely tired themselves out, by seeing the procession pass at least half a dozen times, by running down little by-

streets and alleys, in the geographical knowledge of which Billy-the-bridge-shooter had for some years been very great, and then catching the marching watch in a new spot, they took one more glance at the two principal streets, Fish Street and Thames Street, and then returned towards their home upon the Bridge. The gaieties and decorations here were not to be despised, although this was no road by which the watch would pass. Many a well-stored table stood before the open door of more than one dwelling there. At one of these were seated Master Checklocke, and his two loving friends, Catchemayde and Silkworm. Cromwell's good ale had done its work so well, that now they not only swore they loved each other, but were in love with all the world; this they endeavoured to prove, by insisting upon kissing Flora Gray, but, being a little the worse for liquor, the Bridge-shooter good-humouredly managed to receive all their embraces, instead of the maiden, and then left them in a furious quarrel about whose wife she really should be. Flora and her swain, as they entered the door, looked back, and saw the three friends embracing at once, and then fall over the table into the middle of the road.

Edward Osborne had already returned home; they acquainted him with the witch's prophecy, that he would have a strange visitor the next day, and then all retired to rest.

CHAPTER XI.

A SCENE OF HORROR.

Sha weened never have come in such a trap,
 "Alas," quoth she, "that ever this should hap,
 For weaned I never by possibility
 That such a monster of marvaille might he;
 It is against the process of nature."—CHAUCER.

THE war against the monastic orders had now set in with overwhelming fury; many monasteries had already been suppressed; commissioners had been

appointed to take possession of these, and to prepare measures for the seizure of others. The enquirers into the lives and habits of the monks and nuns, were let loose over the whole land, and hunted down their victims in couples.

As a fair sample of the kind of persons engaged upon this religious investigation, as it was called, we may take Harry Horton and his coadjutor, who turned out to be no other than the brother of the Blear-eyed Bully. This man had, for a long time before, been employed as one of Henry's foreign spies, and it was in returning from his labours in ferreting out some of the designs of the potentates abroad, that he had discovered his dead brother, after the execution at Billingsgate. It was impossible for Horton to have been linked to one more congenial to his own feelings. They possessed the like dispositions for cunning villany, an equal disregard for every virtuous or honourable sentiment, added to a total absence of all feeling for the sufferings of others. There was another point upon which they were perfectly agreed, and that was an unalterable hatred to Edward Osborne. Horton's new ally was called Beltham Spikely, and it was he who had scowled so blackly upon the Bridge-shooter on St. John's Eve. He had completely disguised his visage by allowing his whiskers, beard, and long moustache to grow, which they did most luxuriantly. This was more a whim on his part than a necessary precaution to avoid detection, for such a trifle as torturing within an inch of death a youth humble as Osborne, was not likely to be regarded in any very serious light by those in power, and who at present were in want of all the assistance they could gain from unprincipled tools. To tempt the heads of the various houses to resign quietly their lands and wealth, promises of protection and rewards were lavished upon all, but these promises were never intended to be fulfilled, and even protection to the aged was but seldom accorded. All monks under

twenty-four years of age were absolved from their vows, and, no provision being made for their support, they were sent adrift at once upon the world, to beg, or steal, or starve, as the chance might be. The elder portion were allowed to make choice of freedom, or, if they preferred the monastic life, they were drafted off in small numbers into other houses, that might for the season be still allowed a short existence. The most helpless of the religious orders were the poor nuns, unused to work, unfriended by the world, because the world was now being taught that the nuns were but so many vicious impostors. They were turned out from their former homes to wander where they would, with no further provision "*but a single common gown a-piece.*"

Another cause of great suffering, was that arising from the general poor, who had formerly been relieved at the gates of the various monasteries and convents. Finding these sources of obtaining their daily bread suddenly cut off, the streets in every town, the roads in every direction, became thronged with these wandering starving beggars. Terrible scenes frequently took place midst riot and even bloodshed, when some wealthy house, more notorious than others for its reputation of vile practices, was thrown open to the eyes of the world, and all the hidden deceits laid bare, the miraculous-working images brought out into the main road, and after being made to go through their ingeniously-contrived motions, amidst the laughter and ridicule of the very people who, but a short time before, had viewed their workings with amazement and with awe, they were broken up and burnt. The more the crowd found they had been so long deceived, the greater was the resentment felt against the juggling contrivers of the cheat; and in some instances the priests paid the forfeit of their crimes by being murdered on the spot.

The nunnery which now came under the especial guardianship of Horton and his companion, was the

Convent of the Minories. The nuns of St. Clair had long held a reputation for great beauty, and their chapel was always thronged, in consequence of the music being performed in a manner far superior at their religious house to that at most others. One of the principal causes of this reputation in music, arose from the beauty of the voices of the Cripple of the Bridge-gate tower and that of Eoline, "The blind maid of St. Clair," as she was usually called. The Cripple, from being truly ugly and deformed, was regarded as a privileged being at the convent, and, although a man, was allowed the full range, not only of the farm attached, but also of the interior of the nunnery. He was a great favourite with the inmates, because he used to bring them all the news of the external world, and then would sing his sweetest songs to amuse them for whole evenings together. The poor Cripple would never have dared to own, even to himself, that he loved, had he not fancied he had found in Eoline's blindness an excuse for venturing to give way to the sweetest of all passions. He knew the fascination of his voice, and he also knew that Eoline could hear; a joy extreme was his whenever she owned she loved to hear it. Her two most powerful senses were those of hearing and of touch. Now, it so happened, that the Cripple's hand was almost feminine, and when it came in contact with her own, its tender pressure thrilled to her heart; as did his voice when he sang. Thus, then, the blind and lame became sworn lovers. She was beautiful, but then she had no eyes to read the admiration her charms created. He was ugly, but she saw it not; and that very ugliness was her safeguard against his being tempted from his truth to her, for all who saw him, loathed him.

Before we enter upon the strange occurrences which were soon to take place within the Convent of the Minories, we must cast a glance backwards, as far as that day upon which the saintly Father Brassinjaw was trotting along the road, mounted upon his little

fat, long-eared mule. It may be remembered he was journeying to the lonely cottage in which Horton had for a time taken up his abode; and he trotted along with a breast boiling over with saintly indignation against both Horton and the lovely Alyce, for their daring to keep from their confessor so great a secret as the one they endeavoured to hide. So well did Brassinjaw play his cards, that Horton was completely taken off his guard, for he believed the priest knew much more of the truth than he really did; for, in fact, he knew nothing, but he guessed a good deal. Horton soon found, that unless he allowed Father Brassinjaw a good half of the spoil he intended to gather, he should have to relinquish the whole, and must himself be brought to a fearful reckoning. He agreed to all the father's pretty bold demands, which he made, as he said, to show that such duplicity as that of Horton was not to go unpunished by the Church's sense of justice. Horton succumbed the more readily as he required the services of Brassinjaw to visit the Blear-eyed Bully, and endeavour to find out whether he would die without betraying his accomplices. It was settled with regard to Sir Filbut, that they should fleece him as thoroughly as possible, and that Alyce, for reasons which Horton kept to himself, should not be allowed to guess that Brassinjaw ever for a moment suspected her.

After the execution of the Bully, Horton came in contact with the Bully's second self, his twin brother; it was arranged that they would all three act in concert. Spikely not only served the king as a spy, but robbed him as a smuggler. He had a vessel of his own, in which he ever was passing backwards and forwards from and to the Continent, orders being given that his boat was not to be too closely watched, enabling him to export from this kingdom vast quantities of that strictly-prohibited article, the staple of our land—wool. The method employed to deceive the officers of the customs, was to pack the wool in beer casks,

and so carelessly was the duty of examination performed, that a little yeast being smeared about the bung-hole, was deemed precaution quite sufficient to prevent detection.

Sir Filbut Fussy was tempted to pay a large sum for this vessel to convey him and Alyce, and all his valuables, to Italy; and as it was not known when the fortunate hour might arrive, it was settled that all Sir Filbut's goods and chattels should be shipped by degrees, and then all things kept in readiness, so that the moment Sir Filbut stepped his foot aboard, the sails might be set, and thus the deeply-plotted villany consummated.

Brassinjaw agreed to the attempt to drive Osborne out of his mind by fright, and it was his own scheme that Spikely, being so like his dead brother, should buy his clothes from the executioner, and pass for the ghost of the Bully. The reader may remember the scene in the chapel of St. Thomas of the Bridge, and the supernatural disappearance, as Osborne at the time believed, of the ghost, as it descended the stairs to the crypt below, and which Brassinjaw had declared he never saw, although he ascended at the very moment. The more secure Horton and his companion believed themselves to be, the less did they feel inclined to go shares with Brassinjaw, and they were ever trying to chouse him out of his proportion of the profits.

Horton had proved himself such an adept at finding out the vices of the poor monks and nuns, who fell beneath his hands, that Cromwell bestowed on him almost unlimited power over all but the lives of the poor creatures intended to be sacrificed. He and his companion now took the affairs of the Nunnery of the Minories into their most serious consideration; and having extorted from the sisterhood all they could by threats or promises, they still felt convinced that more secrets lay hidden within the bosoms of many of the nuns, and that if they could but make them speak out, there would be, at least glorious amusement, if

not great gain for themselves in a worldly point of view. A diabolical idea entered the head of Horton, which made Spikely roar with laughter, and so taken were they both with the glorious thought, that they hurried off at once to put it into execution. The Abbess was away from home when they arrived; for this they were rather glad, so putting on a look of mock gravity, they summoned the nuns before them, and for a time, carried on the examination in as serious a tone, as their inward determination for mischief would allow them to assume. Presently the grand scheme was to be carried out, the wine cellars were thrown open, the wine brought forth, and the poor nuns compelled to drink until they became mad from intoxication. Some laughed, some sang, others danced about. Some, who were less stupified by the effects of the wine they had drunk, fell down in fits of weeping upon the floor. The scene was becoming too dreadful to describe, when the Abbess returned, leading by the hand the blind girl, Eoline.

"Ah, ah! my beauty!" exclaimed Horton, as he saw for the first time the lovely Eoline, "come hither, my bright-eyed fair one,"—he knew not that she was blind, for although usually her eyes were gently closed yet, when alarmed, the lids uprose, and then those eyes were beautiful to look at, though sightless—"come hither, and sit upon my knee," said he, "and drink confusion to yon old hag, the Lady Abbess."

"Confusion to the Lady Abbess!" exclaimed some of the nuns, who had been compelled to say these words a dozen times before.

"Horror!" ejaculated the Abbess. "Eoline, to your cell, to your cell, or fly the place altogether——"

"Indeed, but she does not!" roared out Horton, "she shall be my own particular angel—I've suddenly fallen in love with her." So saying he rose, as if to approach Eoline.

"Touch her not!" exclaimed the Abbess; "if you lay but a finger on her, I will utter words, that,

monster as you are, shall make your hand to wither and fall powerless."

"I'm too much up to your miracles, my old hag, to heed words, although uttered by a holy Lady Abbess. One kiss I will have, if but to put your vaunted juggling to the test."

The Abbess seized his outstretched arm, and hurriedly whispered into his ear a few words. He stood for a second motionless, his lips moved silently, as if his memory was at work, and at last he exclaimed—"If what you say is true, and I believe it is so, you have given up a secret which to me is worth her weight in gold. You are right—right—she is safe from me, and mind, that on your life, you keep her safe from others. Keep the secret still, until I have determined what course you must pursue."

The two monsters left the nunnery; the moment they were gone, the few nuns who had fled from fear, upon the approach of Horton and his myrmidon, and had taken shelter in the farm belonging to the convent, returned, and with kindly care took charge of the poor creatures, who were still under the influence of the intoxicating draughts they had been compelled to swallow.

The Abbess sat musing for a few minutes, then started up as if a sudden determination had seized upon her mind. Late as was the hour of night, she dispatched messengers in various directions to find out Father Brassinjaw; they were commanded to bring him straightway to her, as she must consult with him on an affair of the deepest import. One of the servants of the farm was also sent to command the Cripple of the Bridge-gate-tower not to lose a moment, but to hasten to the convent.

The scenes that had just taken place had thrown the whole establishment into the wildest excitement.

"Child," said the Abbess to the blind girl, "bless thy want of sight! better, far better be without

eyes, than having eyes, be forced to look upon the sights I have this night witnessed. I would confess thee to-night, child. I have deep reasons for the act. Follow me to the chapel, and at the altar's foot, mind that you answer truly every question I shall put."

The Abbess having whispered some orders to those about her, left the hall; she bore in her hand a lamp; this was the only light within the chapel. The Abbess placed the lamp upon the altar, then kneeling down, murmured a long prayer. This ended, she confessed the blind girl, Eoline, whose answers appeared to give great comfort to the mind of the Abbess, who, at the conclusion of a long string of interrogatories, kissed her forehead, saying, "All may yet be well, at least for thee; would that my passions were as calm, as pure as thine!"

Father Brassinjaw now hurried into the chapel, and, for a wonder at so late an hour, was sober. He was soon made acquainted with all that had happened, and, notwithstanding the sanctity of the spot, he let loose his feelings, and called down a good round curse upon the head of Harry Horton, for daring to violate a region he regarded as peculiarly his own. The Abbess, leaving Eoline praying at the altar, retired with the reverend hypocrite to a distant part of the chapel, to consult with him on her intended project. They debated the subject warmly, but in the end the saintly Father Brassinjaw fell entirely into the views of the Abbess, who, ringing her little silver bell, summoned the inmates of the sacred pile to prayer. Eoline was ordered to retire, and do whatever she was bidden. Those whose duty it was immediately commenced lighting up the chapel, which, in an incredibly short space of time, changed from that of gloom to brightest splendour. The candles upon the altar, ranging from the length of a few inches to that of several feet, were all ignited, and gave a peculiar beauty to the midnight scene; not a lamp was left unlighted. The incense sent forth its peculiar holy

vapour throughout the sacred aisles, and all the appliances of the gorgeous style of worship connected with the Roman Catholic Church were called into requisition. Father Brassinjaw put on his sacred robes, and had just performed his first genuflection before the altar, when Willy the Cripple of the Bridge-gate-tower entered the holy precincts. He was about to take his usual place as a singer, when he was astonished at being beckoned by the Abbess to approach her, and still more so when he heard her thus address him. "Be not surprised at this unusual call, or rather, let not surprise (for surprised you must be) so blind up the free will of your brain, that you repent to-morrow of the act you are called upon to perform to-night, that is, if your inclination jump with the chance that this life's strange adventures now present you. Long have I known, that notwithstanding your hopelessness in such a case, that you have loved!" The Cripple was indeed astonished, for though he could not disguise the truth from himself, he had studiously done so, as he thought, from the eyes of the scoffing world, but he was still more astonished as the Abbess proceeded in her address. "The object of your love," she said, "is Eoline!" Here all present, except the speaker and the priest, appeared as surprised as did the poor Cripple; but when she added, "Will you consent to marry her?" he knew not whether he lived or was in another world, or whether all he saw and heard was the strangely-born offspring of a dream. He rubbed his eyes, his ears; he looked around in wild amaze; then falling upon his knees exclaimed, "Oh! holy, holy saints, have pity, have pity upon a wretch, and free him from the witchcraft that now surrounds him! Speak, speak to my soul, and tell me what this means."

The Abbess, taking him by the hand, said calmly, "It means nor more nor less than what my words import. Are you willing, from your own free agency,

unbidden, unconstrained, to take to wife the blind girl, Eoline?"

"How can such a deformed, degraded thing as I say yes? And yet were I but like to other men, and she could love me, nor racks, nor tortures, nor seeing of death itself, should make my lips say no!"

"I knew as much," replied the Abbess; then again sounding her little bell, all the servants of the nunnery farm entered the chapel, and, amidst several nuns, the Cripple beheld the fair star of all his heart's most secret hopes, enter the chapel. She was now attired in white, and over her head, reaching to the ground, hung down a superb veil. She answered as warmly to the questions put to her as he had done, regarding her free acceptance of the Cripple for her husband. Upon this the Abbess laid great stress, and called all present to witness that no force had been employed. Not an act that could render the marriage lawful and indissoluble was omitted; every one present either signed their names, or made their crosses, as witnesses to the holy contract; and thus to the heart's joy, but surprise unfathomable of both, did the Cripple of the Bridge-gate-tower and the lovely blind girl, Eoline, find themselves suddenly man and wife.

"For reasons well known to ourself, and our holy Father Brassinjaw," said the Abbess, "it is requisite this marriage, for a season, be kept a profound secret."

The Cripple was rather relieved than annoyed at hearing this; for, so completely by surprise had he been taken, that although he had a wife, he had no idea of where he was to take her, or how he was to provide for her. The only boon he craved, and that he did secretly of the Abbess, was for permission to divulge the truth to one friend—and that friend was Edward Osborne. This permission being granted, the assemblage dispersed. Father Brassinjaw remained for some time in secret conference with the

Abdess upon their future plans; and the Cripple, taking a kind adieu of his sweet young wife, strolled towards the Bridge.

CHAPTER XII.

DEATH OF SIR FILBUT FUSSY.

Behold my bloody woundèd deep and wide.

CHAUCER.

HEWET arrived safely in Italy. He wandered from place to place, inquiring wherever he had heard Sir Filbut Fussy had friend or relation, about the parties he was seeking, but he could learn nothing likely to throw a light upon the strange elopement. It is true, he heard in Milan that Sir Filbut had written to announce his intended journey; but he had not arrived, nor had any of his acquaintance lately heard from him or of him. As Queen Jane was now ill, and the King having determined that no coronation should take place, the ostensible purpose for which the merchant had travelled so far was useless, and Master Hewet received orders to return with all dispatch to England. The vessel arrived in the Channel, and landed him on the Sussex coast, for it was Master Hewet's wish to pay a mercantile visit to a town that lay hard by. Having accomplished the end he had in view, he started on his homeward journey, riding post, and attended by a country guide.

The guide proved a loquacious clown, whose tongue ran on much faster than his horses. "I make bold to guess your honour be from foreign parts?" observed the guide.

Hewet nodded a slight assent.

"Ah! they be strange places, I have heered. The Frenchmen, they say, can live on nothin, and the Italians eat their wittles by the yard. Why don' they live on beef and puddin as we do? It's our

beef and puddin that makes us thrash 'em as we always does."

Master Hewet, finding he must listen to his guide, whether he wished it or not, endeavoured, by a leading question or two, to elicit, if possible, a little of the flying news of the day.

"News!" said the guide, "oh, ho! there be plenty of news, only it's all old; that is, it's the same thing over and over again. We know that if we are told that Queen Anne's an angel to day, we shall hear that she's a devil to-morrow; and if the King's got a new wife this week, he'll have a newer one next. I wish he'd take a fancy to my old woman, for I'm plaguy tired on her!"

"But," said Hewet, "is there nothing stirring in these parts?"

"Stirrin!" replied the guide, "oh, ho! there be plenty a stirrin hereabouts. There have been two chaps down here stirrin up the old nuns like new 'uns. One was called Master Spike, I thinks, and a sharp chap he was; the other—but he was a precious bad 'un amongst the nuns, I heered—was called Master Harry Horton."

"Horton?" said Hewet.

"Oh, ho! Horton, that was the worst 'uns name; but they're gone to Lunnun town, and a good riddance to bad rubbish, says I."

The road through which they journeyed being fully exposed to the burning sun, became intolerably oppressive. The guide, perceiving that the merchant could not bear the heat so well as he could, said, "If you'd take a fool's advice, just jump down here, get over that stile, and walk through the wood. I'll take the horses round to the other side, two miles off; you'll find it a lovely shady grove to stroll through, and you'll come out as cool and fresh as a daisy. I see you are well armed, not that there's much to be feared on. I hav'nt heered of a robbery there for a good many days past, and I don't think any one has been killed there for these six months."

Although this high praise regarding the safety of the road through the wood, might not be quite satisfactory to some, yet the merchant felt so oppressed and overcome by the heat, that he at once followed the guide's advice; and receiving very minute directions with respect to the way he was to go, and also a large whistle, that the guide declared could be heard at least five miles off (this was in case he should be attacked) Master Hewet crossed the stile and entered the wood; for some way he could hear the guide singing a country ditty, in an accent as broad as his own shoulders: the rustic's ditty ran something after this fashion:—

Tho' merry wag heards in the stately hall,
 Yet merry wag tails on the rustic green;
 Tho' maids of the green wear nor coif, nor caul,
 And dames of the hall sport their silken sheen—
 Pray which be the happier life of the two?
 Why, fool! can't you tell I?—then why should I you?
 Fol de rol, de rol, lol de rol, fol de rol lol!

'Tis useless to try, mon, to mark out the best,
 For God makes us happy, a dog as a cat,
 'Tis like to him blessing—and him that is blest,
 The pleasure's the same—depend upon that.
 So which be the happier life of the two?
 Why, fool! can't you tell I?—then why should I you?
 Fol de rol, de rol, lol de rol, fol de rol lol!

As their roads lay almost at right angles to each other, the distance between them at every step increasing, the sound of the countryman's voice in the same proportion diminished; it became fainter and fainter, and as Collins would have said, had he then lived, was "by distance made more sweet." The merchant found the coolness of the shade refreshing in a powerful degree; not a leaf rustled in the air, not even a bird's sweet note was heard to change the monotony of the silence which reigned around. The trees closed in so thickly over the narrow path, that night appeared suddenly to have usurped the hours of day—sometimes a spot, sometimes a streak of light, would steal through here and there, and then a wide green open space appear, but still no sound. The merchant had

again entered the pathway, on the other side of one of those open spaces, and was mending his space, for the stillness became oppressively monotonous.

Hewet, although no coward, had by degrees brought his mind into so nervous a state, that he had nearly sunk upon the earth, as a sound resembling a groan suddenly struck upon his ear; he paused, and held his breath; he had almost convinced himself that it was but the effect of imagination, when he heard the groan repeated, and now so audibly, that no longer doubt remained. He drew his sword, and standing on his guard, listened to discover the direction whence the sound proceeded. Ere long a deep-drawn sigh too plainly pointed out the spot; it was one he had just passed. He retraced his way for a few paces, which brought him again to the edge of the light open space. A faint voice now endeavoured to call for help, and pushing aside some underwood, the merchant discovered the body of a man; he drew it forth, and kneeling down, raised up the dying man's head upon his arm, when, what was his horror, to discover the features of the blighter of all his hopes. Sir Filbut's eyes met his.

A thousand feelings hurried across the mind of Hewet; at one moment he had raised his sword to take the little life that yet remained. Should he leave him there to rot like a dog, as a just punishment for the wrongs he had inflicted? As he gazed upon him, the eyes of the wounded man opened, and he strove to speak. So weak was he from loss of blood, that his lips moved several times without uttering a sound; at last he said, as a smile passed over his features, "She—she—is innocent!" and then sank back again exhausted.

The merchant for a moment felt his heart rise into his very throat—he seemed choking. "Oh, Heaven!" at last he exclaimed, "make but that appear, and I will willingly lay down my life where now you lie; speak—speak—for mercy sake speak those words once more."

Sir Filbut did not move, and Hewet believed that all was ended; yet, one effort might be made; he placed the whistle to his lips, the shrill sound of which had scarcely died away, when it was answered by another, and in a few minutes Hewet saw his country guide hurrying towards him, attended by three or four other country clowns.

They did not appear at all astonished at what they saw; their only surprise was, that their quarter-staves were not required to protect the merchant. A few branches were soon laid across each other, and a quantity of grass placed upon them, and the wounded knight in this manner was borne out of the wood.

The merchant's anxiety was so great, fearing that he would die ere he had made that clear, which was at present hid in the deepest mystery, that he tempted the men, by promises of high reward, to continue their road as quickly as possible towards London, where proper assistance could be obtained.

Edward Osborne had been apprised, that on that day he might probably see his good master return home, so he made up his mind that the merchant's coming would be the fulfilment of the witch's prophecy; but in this he was mistaken, for a very different visitor called upon him at the house upon the Bridge.

Flora and the Bridge-shooter being both at the front window, and seeing a splendid retinue approaching, put their heads still further forward, but the Bridge-shooter popped his own in, and drew Flora from the window too, for he recognised in the leader of the party the handsome youth who had noticed Flora, and kissed his hand to her; and the poor Bridge-shooter's consternation was great, when he saw the handsome youth draw up at the door, alight, and enter his master's house.

The man in the shop, believing Edward Osborne to be in the first floor, showed the stranger into the very room in which Flora and William were; to attempt

escape was useless, so the Bridge-shooter stood looking vastly silly, and poor Flora blushed enormously.

"What!" said the youth, "is it indeed you, my pretty maid? Why, I have been dreaming about you all night; but it was not to seek you, I am now here, but one Edward Osborne."

At this moment Edward entered: "That is Master Edward," said Flora, again blushing, and with William was about to retire.

"Nay, stay!" said the youth; "the more who hear what I now say to Edward Osborne, the more I shall be pleased." He then went towards Edward, and frankly taking him by the hand, said, "Sir, I owe you a debt," Edward stared with surprise, "a debt at this moment I am unable to pay, but one I wish to acknowledge: Edward Osborne, I owe you my life! Do you not remember saving a youth, who was drowning up by Chelsea?—I am he. Do not think me ungrateful that I have not been to thank you before, but I knew not until yesterday the name of my preserver. Those who were with me, when they saw that I was safe, sought you, but in vain; you were gone, no one knew whither. After all other enquiries had failed, as a mere jest, we visited a certain cunning woman at Houndsditch, and would you, or any one believe it, by her magic art, she instantly told me your name, and where you could be found." To the three whom he addressed, this did not seem very wonderful; but he continued, "Henceforth I shall never doubt witchcraft again. I come, not only in my own name, but in that of my father also, to tell you, that throughout your life, if either of us can be of service to you, command, and you shall not find us wanting. I am called George Talbot—my father is the Earl of Shrewsbury."

Edward Osborne said a hundred pretty things fitted to the occasion, and, as usual, whenever swimming was mentioned, he always gave the whole credit of his own accomplishment to his humble friend, the worthy

Bridge-shooter. Upon this, William had a red Earl's son shake him by the hand, who repeated to him the same promise he had made to Osborne. He placed a very valuable ring upon the finger of Edward, as he once more took him by the hand at parting; then turning to the Bridge-shooter, he said, smiling, and glancing towards Flora, "The frown you gave me when last you met, told me pretty plainly in what quarter *your* heart lies; so, remember, when you two marry, I will give away the bride. Farewell, and believe me, the promises a Talbot makes he keeps!"

Osborne attended the youth to the door, and after another smile and another shake of the hand, George Talbot, with his gay companions, passed across the Bridge.

"The Earl of Shrewsbury," said Osborne musing; "he is high in the favour of the king, a great soldier, and of a most noble line. You see, William, what fine friends your instructions have brought me."

"And what a handsome young man he is," said Flora; "and what a sweet smile he has; and——"

"And he said he'd give you away; that's more than I'd do," said the Bridge-shooter, "only let us once be married."

"Are all things in readiness for our good master, if he return to-night?" inquired Edward.

"Oh, yes, Master Edward," replied Flora. "Heigho, heigho! would that we had but more comfort to give him when he comes; but his house is desolate. Hark! what sound is that?"

Flora and the Bridge-shooter ran to the window, and looking towards the entrance of the Bridge, they perceived a crowd approaching. As it came nearer, they were surprised to see in the midst of it the good merchant, Master Hewet. They all hurried to the front door, and surprised indeed they were, when the countrymen who carried the wounded knight, brought their burden into the merchant's shop. The crowd, who had gathered a few particulars from the country-

guide, were aware that the litter bore a wounded man, but whom they knew not.

"I wonder not at your surprise," said Hewet to those in his house, "at seeing me arrive thus accompanied; but your astonishment will be increased a hundred fold when you look upon the features of him who lies there, as I fear, dying. Wait not to ask questions, but prepare a couch whereon he may lie at ease."

"This way," said Osborne, opening the door of the room behind the shop, which, during the merchant's absence, he had made his sleeping room. When the dying man was lifted upon the couch, and the cloak removed, Osborne's astonishment was indeed extreme. The physician whom the merchant had summoned to attend, as they came along, now examined the wounds: they were five in number, and as he regarded them, he shook his head in a manner that augured but little hope. Having dressed the wounds, and administered a restorative, the physician retired, promising to come again, but at the same time whispering to the merchant that "he believed it would be merely to look upon a corse."

The merchant, as they sat watching the dying man, in a low voice acquainted Osborne with the manner in which he had discovered the knight, and the blessed words, the only ones he had yet uttered, which told of Alyce's innocence.

Sir Filbut moved uneasily upon his couch; they ran to him, when looking around him, he said, "Am I indeed beneath this roof? It is but justice—justice that I should die here. I have but a brief space left to render all the reparation now within my power: pray Heaven may grant me sufficient strength to say all I would have you know. But first, bear witness that here I swear, before Heaven and man, that Alyce is innocent. My vanity, and the plottings of a fiend, have wrought this misery. You remember the day that Alyce left this roof? I waited her coming with

all the mad vanity of a fool; she came, but instead of her eyes beaming with love, as I had hoped, and indeed expected, they were red with weeping. A look of shame and indignation overspread her features as she said, 'I have taken a bold step, but one my heart tells me my injured pride will justify. Tell me, tell me,' she exclaimed bursting in'o tears, 'what have I ever done to call from you this deadliest insult an honest wife can e'er receive—the words of love from any but her husband?' 'Alyce,' I said, astounded at what I heard, 'you cannot, Alyce, pretend to be ignorant, after the letters you have received.' 'Letters,' she replied, 'I have received no letters but the one I found in my room last night, and that I tore and burnt, after drowning it in tears of shame.'"

Here the merchant and Flora looked at each other, for they remembered the fragments of the letter they had found, and which seemed so thoroughly to have proved her guilt.

"'No letters!' I exclaimed, 'why, Flora has given you at least twenty.'"

"Oh, heavens!" exclaimed Flora.

"Do not interrupt me," said the knight. "I know now that you had not done so. I then explained to her how Horton, your apprentice, working upon my vanity, had first told me that she had confessed to Flora her love for me. I paid him heavily to buy up Flora's silence, and to tempt her to give my letters secretly to her mistress. He pretended to bring back messages of kindness and affection. All circumstances combined to lead me on in my madness. One night, during your absence, while singing beneath her window, I saw a female form watching at the casement—the window gently opened——"

"Oh dear! oh, dear!" exclaimed Flora; "some of the mischief, then, I did really cause. It was I who opened the casement, to listen to a serenade offered, as I thought, by her intended to Alyce Vaughan opposite."

"I thought it was your mistress. Horton had told me she would expect me on that night. Oh! how I blush, not only for my villany, but for my weakness in thus being made the dupe of such a wretch! But what had most confirmed me, was Alyce's reception of the costly diamond I sent her by him."

"He told us," interrupted the merchant, "he had found it, and prayed for my wife to wear it for that one day, and that no doubt the next day he should discover the right owner. The next day he said he had done so, and received it back again, and we never saw it more."

"So Alyce told me," said the knight; "it was *his* scheme, the offer I made to teach her riding; he told me it was her idea. The thing that surprised me most was, that believing as I did that I possessed the affection of Alyce, yet, whenever we were alone, no look, no word, ever escaped her that you might not have witnessed. He told me that was her whim; she would not allow a word of love but in my letters, and that I must put up with her fancies until we were safe abroad. Finding that I had been duped, I fell upon my knees before Alyce, and sought her forgiveness. I told her that a vessel lay in the river, in which I had believed she was to fly with me to Italy; that on board that vessel Horton had conveyed all my wealth, and that I would hasten thither, and from that hour she should never more be insulted by my presence.

"I left her, my heart bursting with feelings of remorse for my conduct towards that angel and yourself, with vengeance against the villain Horton, and shame for my own weak folly. I was on my way to seek out Horton, and bring him to a dread account before I fled this land for ever. I had not gone far, when I was suddenly seized and dragged to a boat. I was conveyed on board the very vessel I had paid so much to purchase. I was kept close prisoner in the hold. The man who appeared to have command was a giant in form, with eyes unnaturally protruding.

He returned to the shore, after giving orders to sail to the Continent, and when the cargo was delivered, to return to a certain part of the Sussex coast, and there, await his coming. After we were well at sea, I was removed to a better prison. By what I could gather, from words that reached me through the partition of my cabin, I learnt that the crew were smugglers, and that they believed my fate was to be a watery grave. At last we returned in sight of the Sussex coast. One dark night, despair giving me strength, I managed to force so much away from the sides of the little window of my prison, that at last I succeeded in dropping into the sea and swam to shore. The next day, I was on my way to denounce Horton, when, near the spot in which you found me, I saw two men in the distance, who perceiving me, nuffed their faces in their cloaks, and receded again into the wood. I had only just entered the covered path, when I was suddenly stabbed. I saw not those who inflicted the wounds. I had fallen on my face—had fainted!”

Here Sir Filbut appeared completely exhausted, but after a violent effort, he said, “Ere I sink in death, let me be blessed by hearing from the lips of Alyce, that I die forgiven.”

They now explained, that since the day he had seen her last, she had never again returned. This he seemed scarcely to comprehend, for his mind began to wander; they endeavoured to discover what he knew concerning the abduction of the child, but this was hopeless; he sank upon the pillow, as in a dream he murmured, “and let—thine eyes—change—night to—day,” he then drew one deep breath, and he was dead.

“Bring yonder screen,” said the merchant, “and place it before the couch.”

Flora and the Bridge-shooter, in doing this, revealed to the eyes of Hewet the portrait of his beloved Alyce, which Osborne had hid there, instead of destroying it. The moment the merchant saw that

sweet face, he rushed towards it and kissed it madly. But now, instead of the revelation made by the murdered knight clearing up the mystery concerning Alyce and the child, that mystery seemed to become more and profound. In proportion as the heart of the merchant had been relieved by what he had just heard, the heavier grew the pain of his bereavement. She was innocent, but she was gone. What might not be her fate—her sufferings? and his child too!—They were lost in a sea of conjectures, when a messenger came hurrying in, from the mother of the Bridge-shooter to Edward Osborne, praying of him for his life to hasten to the Convent of the Minories—to take with him her son, or any trusty friend; but on his life not to neglect her bidding, for there was one who would require all his assistance.

The old woman had kept to herself, that it was the Cripple who stood in need of aid; so her son, thinking there might be something of real moment hidden beneath her words, prayed of the merchant to accompany them—"For," as he said, "who knows but mother at last may turn out a witch in reality; that cross and the blind girl meant something, you may depend."

Hewet had other reasons for wishing to go to the Convent; his was a wish to make an offering of thanksgiving, in the shape of a rich present at the altar.

Flora, who wouldn't remain at home in the house of death now it had become night, seized hold of the Bridge-shooter's arm, and insisted upon going too.

Before they arrived there, a strange scene had been enacted. Horton, armed, as he thought, with full authority, had had the hardihood again to face the insulted Abbess.

Horton had come to take away the blind girl Eoline:—"You take her hence, you!" said the Abbess; "and pray who may you be, possessing such mighty power? A slave of the court, an oppressor

of the weak, I know you to be ; but strong as you think yourself, that poor blind child shall laugh your threats to scorn."

"You ask me who I am—you know it well!" said Horton. "You ask me my power over Eoline—you know that too. Who else has power, if I have it not?"

"He's here!" replied the Abbess, as the Cripple entered.

"He!" said Horton with a sneer, "why, 'tis the Cripple of the Bridge—what power has he?"

"The strongest of all!" replied the Abbess, "the power of a husband! Eoline is now the Cripple's wife. You may frown and look big," she continued, "but what I do, I do strongly. You may as well endeavour to part the world in two, as part that man from his lawful wife."

This scene was suddenly put a stop to, by the nuns running in, shrieking in wild alarm, that the Convent was on fire. All was confusion and dismay, the bell was rung, the people from the farm came quickly to their aid; the night being dark, the flames told those far off the destruction that was going on; and Horton, laughing at their distress, left them to their fates.

He had scarcely gone, when the merchant and those of his household arrived. Here were some carrying the rich furniture of the chapel, and placing it upon the grass; the nuns surrounded it, and falling upon their knees, sung a prayer to Heaven to befriend them: the scene was strange, but picturesque and awful, for the flames kept rapidly gaining strength.

Eoline, who was clinging to the merchant Hewet, suddenly uttered a shriek, and said to him in accents made scarcely audible by horror—"There is one they have forgotten yet, the mad girl in the vaults beneath; in Heaven's name attempt to save her! The way is intricate and dark, but I can lead you there, for darkness has no power over the blind; come, for the love of Heaven, come!" She hurried along, holding the hand

of the merchant, and threaded their way through long passages beneath. The merchant could not help feeling a thrill of horror at their situation ; if he let go the poor girl's hand, or she were to faint, all hope must vanish ; the place was as dark as the grave, and they had wound first one way then another, so that to retrace his steps unguided were impossible.

"We are near the spot now," she said, as they reached a door, which, to her horror, she found was locked. "Oh, all is lost!" she said ; "the door of this passage is fastened ; unless you have strength to break it down, the poor mad creature must be burnt alive."

The merchant exerted again and again all his strength, but in vain ; a last effort more violent from despair, and the shattered door flew in a hundred pieces before them. Eoline once more took his hand and on they went anew. "Tis here!" she said, unbolting a door ; "her's is a silent madness ; she never speaks ; feel for her where she lies ; take her in your arms, she will not resist."

The merchant entered the cell, and feeling his way round by the walls, had nearly made the circuit of the place, when his foot was stayed by something lying on the ground ; he stooped, and found it was a human being.

"Quick, quick, bring her forth!" said Eoline ; "take her in your arms, and I will, by your cloak, lead you hence : we must be quick ! on, on !"

They hurried forward, for the merchant had confidence in the power of his guide. As they approached the longed-for egress from this dismal place, the noise and confusion without became more distinct ; at last they saw the opening at the end of the passage : one moment more and they were safe.

The Cripple, who thought at that time of no one but his Eoline, flew to her, and danced about as though he had been mad.

The merchant had gone forward to deposit his charge

in safety, further from the burning Convent. Presently all turned to where he stood, for with a frantic cry he called to all around. "Oh, Heavens!" he exclaimed, "see, here! see, here! it is an angel that I am pressing to my heart. It is my Alyce—it is my wife!"

CHAPTER XIII.

THE ABBESS OF ST. CLAIR.

Nor of her daughter not a word spake she.

CHAUCER.

It was no time for explanation; nor, indeed, did the merchant for an instant think of aught but of his own happiness in once more pressing his dear Alyce to his heart. How she came to be in such a strange place as the cell of the Convent, or why she had been only known as the mad girl, at that time never crossed his mind; he only saw, he only felt, that his beloved wife was again restored to his heart, and that was all-in-all to him. As crowds of apprentices, and others, had arrived from the city, an attempt to extinguish the flames was commenced. Buckets and tubs, handed from one to the other by a whole line of apprentices, reaching from the Convent to a neighbouring pond, soon served to bring sufficient water to combat, and at last to overcome the raging flames.

When the Convent had assumed the appearance of a blackened ruin, and fears of further danger had vanished, all present began to reflect more coolly upon what was next to be done, in the way of providing accommodation for the houseless nuns for the night. The Abbess and her flock made the best shift they could at the farm. It was settled that the Cripple should conduct his beautiful blind wife to the cottage of the Bridge-shooter's mother, where she should for the present take up her regular abode.

A litter, borne by two horses, was soon provided, in which Alyce was placed, and with Osborne on one side, and the merchant on the other, Hewet holding his wife's hand in his own, they took their way towards the Bridge. Flora and the Bridge-shooter had hurried on before to make all ready for the reception of the merchant's wife. As the litter was passing through the dark postern gate of the city, the horses had nearly ridden over a man who came on hurrying from the opposite direction; he appeared hastening towards the Convent. So completely had his fright, caused by the horses, thrown him off his guard, that he uttered a dreadful oath, in a violent tone of voice, at the sound of which the whole party recognised him as being the saintly Father Brassinjaw. At the same time a slight shriek came from the litter, and Alyce murmured, "Oh, save me! save me!" Hewet thought no more of the priest, who had hurried by, but pressed his wife's hand fervently to his lips, as if to tell her, by that kiss, how safe she was with those about her. These words were the first Alyce had yet uttered, and immediately they had died upon her lips, she appeared to sink again into her former hopeless state of imbecility. When they arrived at the merchant's house, a little incident occurred, which caused the blood in Hewet's heart to swell it almost to bursting; this was, as he was entering the room, bearing his wife in his arms, his eye fell upon her picture, which Flora and the Bridge-shooter had restored to its former position. A thousand feelings rushed upon his mind at once; the order he had given for its destruction—the unhallowed thoughts with which he had hastened to far-off lands—and then came the bitterest reflection of all, that now, although his wife was restored to him pure and innocent, where was his child? Alas! not there to welcome the return of its poor, afflicted mother. So completely had all memory vanished from the mind of Alyce, that when they seated her in her own accustomed spot, she looked around so vacantly, that it was evident all her

eyes beheld brought back no recollections of the past. She regarded her husband with the same indifference as she looked upon Edward or on Flora. There was a slight smile for a single moment passed over her pale but lovely features, when Juno, her favourite dog, came bounding in, and flying upon her lap, licked her hands in kindness, then barking loudly, as though to wake her from her trance, flew wildly here and there, then rolled himself upon his back, and gazed up in her face, as praying to be noticed. Shortly afterwards Alyce was conveyed to her sleeping apartment, and scarcely had her head sunk upon the pillow, ere she was lost in a profound slumber. The merchant, who had been seated watching by the side of her couch, now offered up to Heaven a sincere thanksgiving for the restoration of his beloved wife, and a prayer, equally fervent, that his child might soon be discovered, and once more bless his arms. Having fulfilled these duties, he joined the other inmates of his dwelling, who were busily conversing upon the strangeness of all the incidents of that day. But how to account for the merchant's wife being found in such a place as a cell in the Convent of the Minories, and in such a pitiable condition as that in which she had been discovered, passed all their ingenuity to imagine. "No doubt," said the merchant, "all will be explained by the superior of the Convent, and, indeed, it must and shall be. Strange things are being brought to light concerning the evil practices of nearly every religious house in the land; and if there be aught here of villany that has been employed against my Alyce, my life and wealth shall both be sacrificed but I will bring the guilty to severest punishment. But it were useless now to conjecture; in the morning I will to the nunnery, when all shall be made clear." They had all risen for the purpose of retiring to rest, when they were startled by hearing a violent cry of horror—so suddenly, so unexpectedly, the frightful shriek struck upon the ear, that for a moment they stood as if spell-bound.

They all turned towards the room in which Alyce lay; but the sound had not proceeded from that direction.

Before we enter upon the cause of their alarm, we must follow the footsteps of the saintly Father Brass-injaw, who, the reader will recollect, passed the merchant and his party as they were entering the city by the postern gate. He was then hurrying from the Cardinal's Hat, upon the Bridge, where he had but just ensconced himself comfortably behind a flagon of Romney sack, and was listening to a delightful dispute between the three loving friends, Catchemayde, Checklocke, and Silkworm, concerning which of the three was of the most importance, the bowyer, the shaft-head maker, or the stringer? "Why, the bowyer, of course," said Catchemayde, standing up as usual for his own craft; "a bow, mark me, is like a human body, and, if so, I pray thee what would be the use of the head or the sinews, if one lacketh the back-bone?" Catchemayde here looked wondrous wise, as if he had accomplished a figure of speech of uncommon beauty, and had started a proposition of unanswerable logic.

"But thy back-bone, as thou callest the bow-staff," replied Silkworm, "would avail thee nought, but for the strings, or sinews, as I call them, to bend it to thy will."

"Nor either do much service," said Checklocke, "but for the sharp head to direct the aim; and my heads are sharp enough to strike conviction into the thickest skull in Christendom. I'll warrant them to penetrate an inch broad at eight hundred feet."

"If shot from one of my bows," replied Catchemayde.

"And that bow strung by me," retorted Silkworm.

"And the arrow-shaft boiled, pared, and feathered by your humble servant," said a sharp-nosed little man, an arrow-maker. "It's my opinion, neighbours," he continued, "that more depends upon the straight-

ness of the arrow-shaft and the goose's feather, than all your handy-works together. An arrow of an ounce weight, well mounted with two equal feathers, plucked from the white wing of a gander of two years old, and one from a goose that's brown or gray, to mark the proper placing of the arrow, will—will—will——”

“Wilt thou hold thy peace?” interrupted Father Brassinjaw. “Cease this senseless jargon of thy trades, shake hands in amity, for if but one of ye lend not the others aid, believe me, we shall see no more victories like Cressy, Agincourt, or Poitiers. All England's greatness owe we to the bow and arrow; and to whom, I pray ye, do we owe the arrow or the bow? Why, to you four combined, do we not? So come, shake hands, and I'll join ye in the *drinking* of another bowl.”

This well-timed flattery produced an instantaneous effect, and a thumping bowl was about to be ordered, when mine host entering, announced that the sky had become suddenly illumined by a raging conflagration somewhere by the Minories.

“The Minories!” exclaimed Father Brassinjaw, and rising, hurried away to learn the truth; and being told that the Abbess was in safety at the farm, he was soon in the presence of the superior of the nuns of St. Clair. “Sad work, this, holy sister,” he said, puffing and blowing, and in a tone made almost inaudible from want of breath; “but deeply as I was buried in my devotions on the Bridge, I lost not a moment in flying to your assistance, and now with my prayers——”

“Prayera!” ejaculated the Abbess, with an expression of utter contempt, and with a look as black as night. “Prayera—*thy* prayers, indeed!”

“What means my gentle Savage?” inquired Brassinjaw.

The Father did not place his words thus as a jest, or insult—the Abbess's name was really Savage. Elizabeth Savage was the last superior of the nuns of St.

Clair, at the Convent of the Minoreesses—hence our Minories. It was this same Elizabeth Savage, who at the general suppression of the monasteries in 1539, surrendered the house of the "Poor Clares," as they were called, into the hands of Henry the Eighth, who was to allow her a small pension, which, we believe, like most others of the sort, was never paid.

"Not only Savage am I by name," she replied, "but savage thou shalt find me in my nature. And this is what I mean—you have deceived me—the mad girl in the cell——"

"Good heavens!" exclaimed Brassinjaw, "I had forgotten her; the saints forbid that she be buried in the ruins! Speak quickly, is she safe?"

"Safer than we are," replied the Abbess; "and all through you deceiving me. Why not have told me who and what she was?"

"And how know you her name, or state?" said Brassinjaw, somewhat alarmed.

"I know them both from one that cannot be deceived—her husband."

"Hewet!" exclaimed the saintly Father.

"He has been here, and found his wife confined as a lunatic in our cells beneath the Convent. You must account for this; I cannot, nor will I jeopardise myself or my nuns in screening you. You have raised up a pretty enemy, in truth."

"Then you must raise a prettier friend to answer it," replied Brassinjaw; "I mean, young Horton."

"Horton!" exclaimed the Abbess. "A likely friend, forsooth, we may look for in Harry Horton, the minion of our deadliest foe, the accursed Cromwell."

"Sister," said Brassinjaw, "it is useless to lose our time in reviling each other. You have a strong brain, stronger than mine, I know. I therefore at once throw myself humbly on thy mercy. If you assist him not, by your superior wisdom, poor Father Brassinjaw is lost for ever."

"If you would have me advise you in this woe-

ful strait," she said, "speak for once openly and with truth. Firstly, answer me, what made you bring the woman here?"

"The hope of gain," he replied, unhesitatingly.

"Your answer carries truth with it in every word," said the Abbess; "but how did you seek to accomplish the end in view? I cannot promise hope, unless your confession be full and ample."

"It shall be," said Father Brassinjaw, who felt that it would be a difficult task to rescue him from the dilemma into which circumstances had thrown him, unless aided by the good service of the Abbess of St. Clair. From what he now disc'osed, it appeared he had received from Sir Filbut Fussy several large sums of money for the revelation of confessions which Alyce, as the reader may guess, had never made. And at his instigation Sir Filbut had written the letter, which was afterwards found by Flora, torn and burnt; and which Brassinjaw agreed to deliver, without, however, intending to fulfil his promise. His plan was to destroy the letter, and then trump up a tale, to account for Alyce's non-compliance with its ardent prayer. He repaired to the dwelling of Alyce; and returning to the expectant Sir Filbut, delivered a most impassioned reply, promising that Alyce would be at the spot appointed. To this it was Brassinjaw's intention to go instead, as if sent by Alyce, with an excuse for the unavoidable disappointment. Thus they parted; the one to make arrangements for his intended flight, the other to count his gains, and laugh at the credulity of his wealthy dupe. When at his lodging, the priest bethought himself of a little amusement, in reading over the undelivered letter of Sir Filbut; and recollecting that he had placed it between the leaves of his breviary, that he usually carried under his arm, he took it up, but although he examined it leaf by leaf, no letter could he find. The letter had fallen from the book upon the floor of Alyce's apartment, and, as the reader is

aware, was there found by her. When the appointed hour had arrived, he started to the trysting place, when what was his surprise to see in the distance Alyce weeping, and at her feet Sir Filbut Fussey. Almost at the same instant the knight arose, and hurried from the place; and Brassinjaw, believing himself duped by Alyce, approached her, and gave vent to so many holy denunciations, and appalling anathemas against her for her deceit, that the poor simple-minded creature fell at his feet in a deadly swoon.

"I thought," said Brassinjaw to the Abbess, "this fainting was but one of your sex's often-repeated tricks, so I waited patiently her own pleasure to recover; and when she did, I renewed my maledictions. She protested her innocence. But I still believed myself deceived; and, as a last resource, to drive her to divulge all, I enjoined her our severest penance. Your Convent being close at hand, I led her hither; you had been absent for some weeks. I placed her, unseen, in the secret apparition cell, telling her that if she kept back but a single word, the fiend would ere long appear before her eyes. I left her there for some hours alone in utter darkness; when I thought her mind was wrought up by terror to the proper pitch, I then, by the magic lantern's aid, first caused a speck of light to appear upon the wall of the cell. I listened, and could hear her teeth chattering with fear. 'Oh, save me! save me!' she exclaimed; she uttered one fearful cry, and fell as if dead upon the floor. A stupor appeared to have seized upon every fibre of her brain; kindness, nor threats, could force her to utter a single word, excepting 'Save me, save me!' And this she ever repeats upon hearing my voice. Eoline alone knew of her being here, until your return, and fully believes that it was some poor demented thing that I had found wandering about homeless and friendless. You now know all. Advise, and I will follow your advice, be it what it may."

"Had you told me all this before," said the Abbess, "how much anxiety you might have saved yourself. I see no difficulty in the case; keep your own counsel, know nothing of what has transpired, and leave the rest to me. But remember, my house is in ruins, and must be rebuilt; you may guess my meaning. Your attempt at deceiving me must and shall be paid for. Sir Filbut's gold will shine as brightly in my chapel as in yours."

Father Brassinjaw vowed by every saint he could bring to memory, how liberal he intended to be; and finding his fears greatly diminished by the promised assistance of the Abbess, he took his leave, and feeling in want of a little stimulant to support his weary spirit, he determined to solace himself for one hour more in the lower room of the Cardinal's Hat, where for the present we must leave him, and return to Harry Horton. Upon quitting the burning Convent, Horton joined his companion in iniquity, Beltham Spikely, to whom he related how completely he had been foiled by the scheming Abbess of St. Clair. "All I pray the fiends to grant," said Horton, "is that she and all her crew may be burnt to cinders ere the morning. The only difficulty I had to surmount to reach wealth and distinction, was the proof of that girl's existence or of her certain death; and now to have found her thus unexpectedly, and then to have the whole game torn from my hands, and given to that degraded being, the Cripple of the Bridge, is maddening. But I will thwart them yet. Although the estates are lost to me for ever, I still possess documents without which she can never prove her title, and those shall be this night destroyed. At least I'll be revenged, if not enriched."

"Where are they?" enquired Spikely.

"Still in the merchant's house, sewn in the sacking of my bed. Not wanting them before, and having had enough of other affairs to think upon of late, I had in truth forgotten them entirely. But as the

night is dark, and the merchant abroad, I can once more safely mount to my old dormitory from the sterling of the Bridge, and, unknown to any one, bring away not merely those papers, but the rich diamond and the letters of the fool"——

"Why do you tremble?" exclaimed Spikely, as he felt Horton's hand convulsively seize upon his arm, as if to steady himself.

"Have we not both cause to tremble?" was Horton's reply, uttered almost in a whisper; "have we not both cause to tremble after this morning's work? How could he have escaped from the vessel? But fate had doomed him to fall; and that was why we met him so unexpectedly in the wood. But I wish his blood had not been spilt by us."

"By you, you mean," said Spikely, coolly. "I had no hand in his death. But fear nothing; thanks to my precaution in rifling the body of every valuable upon it, suspicion will fall upon your common cut-throats, who, it is well known, would kill a dozen men for a dozen gold nobles. Depend upon it, when the body shall be found, which may not be yet for many a day, it will end exactly as I have foretold."

"Heaven grant it may!" said Horton, attempting to cross himself. "It is the first blood I have ever shed, and at certain moments my eyes seem swimming in it, and I feel like a——"

"Coward," said Spikely, with a sneer.

"Coward, I am none," replied Horton; "and that, even you may one day learn, if you chafe me thus. Let us in here," he continued, as they were passing a wine shop; "the cold has seized upon my heart." They entered, and Horton took two whole glasses of strong spirits, which for a time seemed to renew the powers of both mind and body. "How's the tide now?" he inquired of the helper.

"It's at the flood," was the reply.

"Then let us take boat directly," said Horton to his companion; "we can safely remain beneath the

Bridge at this part of the tide, and need not enter the Cardinal's Hat. I'd rather not be seen near the place at all to-night."

The night was very dark, which favoured Horton's plan. When they had entered beneath the sixth arch, they tied the boat to a ring in the pier, and having found the well-known secreted rope, which still remained in its old place, Horton, with all the dexterity attainable by long practice, mounted speedily towards the little window of his former sleeping room. He was soon within the apartment, and having provided himself with a dark lantern, he gazed around. All seemed just as he had left it. "Spikely is right," he said, "I am a coward, or why should I tremble now? I know not why, and yet my nerves are all quivering. Let me be quick; where is my knife?" He drew from its scabbard a blade which answered the purposes of knife or dagger, which slipping from his hand, fell and stuck upright in the floor; by accident his foot kicked sharply against it, when the blade snapped in two, leaving a portion still in the ground; as he stooped to seize the handle, he had nearly fallen, for the steel was covered with blood. "I—I'll tear the sackiog open," he said; "that dagger must be used no more, the Thames shall bury it for ever from man's sight." He flung it from the window, then hurriedly approaching the bed, he threw off the coverlid, when his eyes seemed blasted by the horrid spectre he there beheld—it was the dead body of the very man he had that morning slain! The cry of horror that he now uttered was the one which had so startled the merchant and those above. Horton knew not where he was, his brain seemed suddenly on fire, he flew to the casement, and seizing the rope, flung himself headlong forth, his body dashed against the pier, and he fell stuuned into the boat. Spikely comprehended in an instant that some untoward circumstance had taken place, so slipping the rope from the ring,

he pulled with all his might through the Bridge towards Westminster. So severe had been the fall, that it was some time ere Horton recovered sufficiently to relate what he had seen.

When the merchant and those with him had recovered from the surprise into which Horton's cry for a moment had thrown them, they felt convinced that the sound had proceeded from the chamber into which the Bridge-shooter had had the body of the knight removed, on account of the expected return of the merchant and his beloved Alyce. The Bridge-shooter, taking up a lamp, and followed by the merchant and Osborne, hastened to the room of death. Here they, for some time, were at a loss to explain what they had heard, until, perceiving that the coverlid had been removed from off the body, which the Bridge-shooter declared he had himself carefully placed over it, they were convinced that some mortal hand had been employed; and of this they were soon made certain, by discovering the dark lantern which Horton in his fright had let fall. The window, too, was open; so that they at once made up their minds that another attempt to rob the house had been meditated, and that, in all probability, the unexpected finding of the murdered knight had so alarmed the thief, that being taken off his guard, he had uttered the ejaculation they had heard, and consequently felt it necessary for his own safety to make a precipitate retreat. The window was soon strongly secured, and the whole dwelling having been strictly searched, even Flora retired to rest with a tolerable feeling of safety.

The investigation which took place concerning the death of Sir Filbut Fussy, ended exactly as had been predicted by Spikely. The absence of every valuable from the body of Sir Filbut was deemed proof conclusive that he had met with his death at the hands of common robbers. The Abbess had, also, proved a correct prophetess, for the tale she told met with

perfect credence from the merchant, the only person who had a right, or felt any inclination, to enter upon the subject. Indeed, so plausibly had the Abbess framed her tale, that the merchant not only thanked her in words for her care of his afflicted wife, but bestowed a large sum towards the rebuilding of the part of the Convent which had been destroyed. The mind of Alyce, which appeared to be paralyzed, showed no symptoms of recovery: her whole day was ever passed in silence. The only slight alteration which took place in the expression of her eyes was upon the approach of her dog, who never seemed happy but when lying at his mistress's feet.

Horton, finding it would be impossible to dissolve the marriage between Eoline and the Cripple of the Bridge, consented to desist from further persecution, upon condition that the Abbess still kept fast his secret. This she undertook to do; Horton promising to protect her and her nuns against the powers that were now rising against them.

Having brought this epoch of our tale to a conclusion, we must here give our pen a rest, and for a few years bid farewell to all our friends on OLD LONDON BRIDGE.

CHAPTER XIV.

ST. BARTHOLOMEW'S FAIR.

With mother's pity in her breast enclosed,
 She goeth, as she were half out of her mind,
 To every place where she hath suppose
 By likelihood her little child to find.

CHAUCER.

NEVER had the sun been known to shine more brightly, nor the sky to look clearer than it did towards the latter end of August, 1539. The 24th of August was near, and, we should like to know, whet

was there then living in London not aware that that day was the one dedicated to St. Bartholomew? Now, it so happened, that some good four hundred years before our tale began, a certain King Henry the First, of England, had a jester, named Rahere. Rahere thinking he could do something better for himself than to be laughed at all his life, turned monk, and built a most magnificent priory with other people's money. The King gave him the ground, which at that time was a most unpromising spot on one side of Smithfield; and we find that, ere long, this penniless monk managed to raise a structure which, for grandeur and riches, could be surpassed but by few in the land. This magnificent edifice he dedicated to St. Bartholomew. Every privilege the King could bestow upon this Priory, he did bestow, and many indeed were the privileges a crowned head then possessed. All taxes were remitted, for monks in their days disliked paying taxes quite as much as the laity does in our own.

Another peculiarity about the monks of old was, that whilst there was a chance of getting anything more, they were never satisfied with what they had; so the Prior of St. Bartholomew, being perfectly aware that the greater number of persons he could get to visit the Monastery on St. Bartholomew's day, the more would his shrine be loaded by offerings, hit upon the expedient of asking from the King the permission to establish a FAIR in and about his holy dwelling. The grant was obtained from Henry the Second, and thus was established the well-known Bartholomew, or, as it is vulgarly called, Bartlemy Fair, which continued to be holden for more than seven hundred years; indeed, until within these last few years.

A fair in the olden time was a very different thing to that which the present generation has witnessed. The two main objects of this fair, after the one of bringing crowds to the shrine of St. Bartholomew,

were for the collection and disposal of woollen cloths and cattle. The first grant was for three days—the eve of the Saint's day, the day itself, and the morrow ; but the worthy traders and showmen found so much profit, and the citizens so much amusement, and pleasant opportunities for spending their money, that the three days were soon extended to fourteen.

As nearly all the clothworkers and drapers of the kingdom congregated at Bartlemy Fair, it was but natural that honest Master William Hewet would not be found wanting ; and we find the largest stall or standing in the Churchyard of the Priory, adorned not only by that worthy name, but also by the identical sign of the Golden Fleece and the Bag of Wool, which had been brought from the merchant's house on the Bridge, and fixed over his stall.

So extensive had Bartlemy Fair become at this period of which we are writing, that it stood in no less than four parishes—Christ Church, Great St. Bartholomew, Little St. Bartholomew, and St. Sepulchre's. Busy indeed were all the traders of London, as well as those of the Bridge, removing their most tempting commodities to their stalls in Smithfield. Several times, during the day we are speaking of, had the Bridge been completely choked up by the numberless shows, each professing, by external decoration, that that one was the greatest wonder in the whole world.

A little incident occurred exactly opposite the merchant's dwelling, which raised the Bridge-shooter's indignation ; but being alone in charge of the house, he could not leave it to interfere. As one of the most splendidly-adorned caravans was passing the Golden Fleece, on which was written in letters of gold, "The greatest wonders in the world ! The real Wood Monster and the Infant Venus," a violent screaming as of a girl suffering from blows could be distinctly heard, issuing from the said caravan ; and these words were uttered by the woman who might

be supposed to be inflicting the chastisement :—"I'll teach you, you blue-eyed minx, to look out of the window: who do you think will pay to see your ugly face if you show it for nothing?" Then came more abuse, more blows, and more screaming, as the caravan passed on its way towards the fair.

All this happened on the day previous to the eve of St. Bartholomew's day. Just before twelve o'clock at night, crowds of the lower orders hastened towards Cloth Fair, Smithfield, and proclaimed the opening of the fair.

The proclamation being ended, the fair began in right earnest. Every conceivable voice that the ingenuity of man, woman, or child could invent was brought into requisition. Gongs, cymbals, trumpets, drums, whistles, rattles, bawlings, cryings, screamings, laughings, shoutings, all burst forth. The whole space of Smithfield was surrounded, first by a row of small stalls filled with thousands of various articles; here a line of jewellers' stalls, there a row of those appropriated to toys for children.

At the backs of these smaller stalls stood the grand exhibitions and shows, their fronts towards the open space of Smithfield cattle market. Many of the shows would, in these our days, produce an odd effect—for instance, a representation of the "Old Creation of the World new Revived, containing the creation of Adam and Eve; the intrigues of Lucifer in the garden of Eden; King Herod's cruelty, his *men's spears laden with children*; Rich Dives in hell, and Lazarus in Abraham's bosom;" mixed up with "figures dancing jigs, sarabands, antics and country dances, with Spendall and Punchinello." A live hare beating a tabour while standing on his hinder legs, was a favourite exhibition, and remained so for many hundreds of years; as did the same thing we see at this day in the streets, namely, a man throwing up three or four balls, and as many knives, and catching them in all manner of directions.

Edward Osborne and his master were too busily employed in the close-yard of the Priory, attending to their numerous country connection, who came now to lay in their stock of goods for the ensuing year, to take much notice of the fooleries of the outward fair. Not so Flora Gray and the Bridge-shooter. Every moment they could spare was devoted to the delights of Bartlemy Fair; and as the only pleasure the afflicted Alyce seemed to feel was that of wandering about, Flora made the amusement of her mistress a sort of innocent excuse for being out in the fair from morning till night. One day, towards the close of the fair, they were stopped by a crowd, dragging along some one towards the Court, to answer for an alleged impropriety of conduct, and whom should this turn out to be but our friend, the Cripple of the Bridge-gate Tower. The Bridge-shooter, seeing him in custody, could not think of leaving a friend in such a plight; so quitting Alyce and Flora, he accompanied the Cripple to the Court. It appeared that the complainant was the manager of the exhibition of the "REAL WOOD MONSTER and the INFANT VENUS;" and as the Wood Monster, it was said, had the night before over-eaten himself, at his evening repast of sawdust and the bark of trees (the real truth was, the man had been dead drunk), he could not appear before the public. In order that his audience should have a monster of some sort, he had applied to the Cripple of the Bridge to come and act for a day or two at an enormous salary; but this offer had so insulted the Cripple, that he at once broke the head of the complainant, and would, in all likelihood, have murdered him outright, had the crowd not interfered.

After the Bridge-shooter had left Flora, she led her mistress towards the very show of the Monster and the Venus. Here Alyce gazed with childish delight at the gay dresses of the paraders in front of the show, and Flora was debating in her own mind which exhibition she should patronize first, that which

gave her mistress such pleasure, or the next one, into which crowds were flocking.

At this moment, Edward Osborne happened to pass, and stopped for an instant to gaze with sorrow upon his dear mistress, who was quite absorbed with the gay sights she beheld. She took no notice of Edward, but exclaimed, "There, there," and pointed towards a man who now advanced to the front of the Monster show. This man was splendidly dressed in green velvet and gold; and on his head he wore a richly trimmed hat, with a superb and lofty plume of feathers; his face was tolerably handsome, what with the paint upon his cheeks, and the neatly trimmed beard, and elegant moustache. He was just about to address the crowd, when a clown, jumping upon his shoulders, popped his hand before his mouth—this caused a roar of laughter, and as it told so admirably with the audience, it was repeated several times; the last time the clown jumped up, he tumbled over the head of the gentleman in green, and in so doing, caught hold of his beard and moustache, and pulled them off; then ran about, pursued by the gentleman, who ordered the clown to be placed in the stocks at the end of the platform, and then began to re-adjust his beard, &c., amidst the laughter of the people.

While he was doing this, young Osborne said to Flora, "It's very strange, but that face, without the beard, reminds me strongly of one I have seen before, but where, or when, or under what circumstances, I cannot bring to mind; but I am certain we have met before." The gentleman in green and gold, having replaced his moustache, began to address the company. The moment the moustache and beard were on, the resemblance which had appeared to Osborne, vanished; so, advising Flora to go to the exhibition before them, he pursued his way to rejoin his master at his stall in the Priory Churchyard.

The man in green said, "My right worshipful and

dearly-beloved friends, on most occasions, when I come forward to proclaim a disappointment, I do it with exquisite pain; but now I do so with unutterable delight, because the disappointment will be no disappointment, but a wonderful gain to you. You are doubtless fully aware of the unlooked-for misfortune that has befallen the greatest wonder in the world—the “Real Wood Monster?” But I see you are, so I will touch upon that painful subject no further, but tell you what I have done for you. I have engaged the “Great Diddle ‘em Downy!!!” Never, during the present fair, had been heard such a shout of applause and laughter as the man in green drew a canvass curtain, and sure enough, there was the far-famed “Diddle ‘em Downy,” seated upon his travelling jacksas.

This Diddle ‘em Downy was, in truth, no other than our old acquaintance Knowy, the flying newsman. It may be remembered that poor Knowy had, when we last saw him, entered upon the “scandal trade,” which, like most scandal merchants, he found, for a time, a very lucrative employment; but by degrees becoming bolder and bolder, he began to take liberties with those who not only had the will, but the power to resent his insults. Happening one unlucky day to touch upon the irregularities of his Grace the King, Knowy found himself whipped within *half* an inch of his life, at the cart’s tail, and the p’leasing intimation given to him, that if he meddled with scandal again, he would discover a cravat round his neck, that he would find rather difficult to untie; so he determined to alter his course of life, and thenceforth became a celebrated comic singer. He had been fortunate enough to make a hit, with the first song he wrote and sang, which was called “London Rogueries, or the life and adventures of Diddle ‘em Downy.”

So widely had the fame of “Diddle ‘em Downy,” flown, that the arrival in Bartlemy Fair of the celebrated singer was hailed with acclamation. He knew

that a little eccentricity always has a powerful effect on the public, so he invariably travelled upon an ass; wore a coat of a fashion quite his own, profusely ornamented with imitation gold and jewels; but the greatest point of attraction was his blue wig, with a pink tail! This was, doubtless, intended as a satire upon the introduction of wigs; for this article of adornment, which, in the time of the Charleses became universal, was unknown in England until the reign of Henry the Eighth. The man in green and gold walked proudly backwards and forwards, bawling out, in a voice that seemed to be passing from a throat lined with sand-paper—"Just going to begin! just going to begin! all in! all in! all in!"—The band of musicians vanished through a slit in the canvass—the man in green and gold heading his troop of actors, passed through another slit—the clown was the last, and pretending to cry bitterly, swore to the people that he was now utterly ruined, for his master had found a greater fool than himself.

It was not to be expected that Flora Gray should resist the temptation of taking her mistress into such a delightful show. As they entered there were two money-takers, one on each side of the opening—a woman sat in one box, a man in the other; there being less crowd at the man's side than at the opposite, they here paid their money for two of the highest priced seats, and soon found themselves comfortably seated, to witness the wonderful performance of Diddle 'em Downy, and the more classical representation of the rising of Venus from the sea, and her adornment by the three Graces.

At last Diddle 'em Downy appeared, and it were useless to attempt a description of Downy's excellence. It is true, that we could say, how at the end of every verse he twisted his celebrated wig into a new position; but what position? Any one could twist a wig, but no one could twist a wig as Downy did. We have searched, in vain, through every MS.

in the British Museum for this celebrated song ; and all we know is merely traditional, and that each verse expressed a peculiar roguery, and ended with these emphatic words—

“ * * * be they black, white, fair, or brown,
And tho' they got up with the lark in the morn,
Yet none could be up to Diddle 'em Downy,”

and then, as was usual with ancient lyric poetry, the words were repeated again and again—

“ Diddle 'em Downy, Diddle 'em Downy—
None could be up to Diddle 'em Downy.”

Three times was the song called for, and three times did Downy vary the Rogueries, until the hearers began to think that the world was made of nothing else.

After a pause slow sweet music was heard. All the platform, or stage, appeared in mist, but this gradually cleared away, and discovered the representation of a calm sunlit sea. Presently, and this part was very ingeniously contrived, dolphins and sea gods rose from the waves, and swam about to the great solace and delight of the audience. So beautiful was all this preparation, that the beholders naturally expected the appearance of Venus to out-do all they had yet seen ; and so it did ; for now a splendid shell began to rise, all glittering with gold, silver, and pearls, in which stood the youthful Venus, attended by the Graces.

The girl who personated the Goddess of Beauty, was famed for the splendour of her hair, so in order to show that off to the greatest advantage, she first appeared with it in loose ringlets, so luxuriant in their growth, that they completely covered her whole figure, lower than her waist.

Poor Alyce gazed at this scene with almost unconscious interest ; her eyes were rivetted upon the beautiful vision. As the music played a soft and dulcet measure, the Graces throwing themselves into most picturesque and elegant attitudes, began to part

the golden tresses to display the beautiful face of Venus. Flora was so taken up in watching the countenance of her mistress, whom she had never yet seen to evince such fixed attention upon any one thing, forgot for a moment all about the show; when suddenly Alyce uttered a shriek that paralyzed every heart, and fell to the ground in a death-like swoon.

All was consternation—the audience rose in alarm—the curtain was closed suddenly; so piercing had been the shriek of Alyce, that other ladies in their fright began to scream too, and some even fainted. The more brutal part of the assembly began to swear at having their enjoyment interrupted, and said it was “only Hewet’s mad wife at one of her freaks.”

As Alyce was being conveyed out, the woman from the money-box came to offer assistance, but the instant she met Flora’s eyes, she started back, and, after a moment’s hesitation, vanished through the crowd. When they were in the open air, Flora espied the Bridge-shooter searching for her; him she sent off to acquaint the merchant with what had taken place, and to beg of him to hasten to the Bridge. Alyce was soon conveyed home, where the merchant, with Edward and the Bridge-shooter, had already arrived.

Alyce sat very still for a time, as if endeavouring to collect some wandering thoughts; then she looked minutely at the features of every one present, examining them again and again; then she passed her fair hand, in the manner of a blind person, gently over the face of her husband, as if to ascertain whether he were a vision, or a corporeal being, saying, “William, I have found her, I have found her!”

“Good Heavens!” exclaimed Flora, “it may—it must be so, Master. I believe that she *has* seen her child,” and Flora then explained to Master Hewet all that had passed at the fair; that being so intent upon watching her mistress, she had scarcely looked at the stage, but what confirmed her in her belief

was, the woman whom she had seen at the doorway, and whom she now felt certain was the same who had stolen away the child.

Not a moment was to be lost. The Bridge-shooter, with Alice Vaughan, from the opposite dwelling, who had ever been most kind in her attentions to Alyce Hewet since her dreadful affliction, were left with the merchant's wife, while Hewet, with Flora and Edward Osborne, for Edward now said that he too had his suspicions that the mountebank in green and gold would prove to be one of the wretches who had formerly attempted his murder, started again for the fair. As they went along they obtained the requisite authority to enable them to search the show for the lost child, and thus armed, they hastened to the booth.

When they arrived there, "Diddle 'em Downy," was once more in the middle of his song, but seeing officers of justice coming on to the stage, for reasons best known to Downy, he imagined that they could want no one but himself, so jumped into the middle of the pit, and escaped by the front of the show. When the woman wearing the dress as described by Flora was produced, great was her disappointment to find a person in no respect but the dress resembling the one who had taken the child. This she declared was not the woman she had before seen so recently, but in answer to this, everybody belonging to the booth swore that no other had taken money at the door that day, and indeed no other ever had. The girl, too, that was now brought forward as the youthful Venus was but very scantily entitled to bear the name; she was a rather plain bandy-legged girl, and much older than Anne could have been. The poor merchant's heart sank within his breast as he turned away. Edward Osborne was doomed, also, to disappointment, for the man in green and gold, when he had removed his moustache and beard, was very, very unlike what he had fancied him to be, when, as he supposed, he had last seen him.

They all returned in a most dejected state. The only one who seemed to feel happier at the events of the day was Alyce. A wonderful change had taken place in her mind ; which, although still unsettled and wandering, was less frequently entirely lost. There was evidently something in her own thoughts which brought a degree of comfort to her, and even the merchant could not banish the hope that still she might be restored to reason. It could not be denied that she now recognised every one who approached her ; but could not be made to understand why they kept her child from her ; formerly she had never named it, now she would scarcely speak of anything else. Once after a long silence she took them all by surprise, by saying, "How wonderfully she is grown—and how beautiful she is—I wish she would come home."

The merchant gave up all hope of ever again seeing his child. Not so Flora ; nothing, she declared, "should ever make her doubt her own eyes ; that *was* the woman, she was certain ; only, as they were conjurers, perhaps they had changed her for a time, but she should find her out yet—and her dear little Anne too, or there was no truth in dreams, or in cards neither."

The next day was the last of the fair, but Diddle 'em Downy having absconded from fear, and the lack of beauty in the Venus being blown, and for other reasons, easily to be guessed at, the monster show packed up all its goods and chattels, and that very day left the ground.

The merchant had been more than usually fortunate ; what with sales and orders, this had proved the greatest year he had ever known ; so while he is busily counting up his gains, and preparing for the next day's removal of the few remaining goods, not forgetting the celebrated sign of the Golden Fleece and Bag of Wool, we will introduce the reader to a new scene.

CHAPTER XV.

THE MEETING AT TYBOURNE.

O feigned woman ! all that may confound
Virtue and innocence, through thy malice
Is bred in thee, as nest of every vice.—CHAUCER.

"I wish the devil had you, or you had longer legs ; tramp on, I say ! tramp, tramp !" This gentle exhortation was addressed to a poor child of some ten or twelve years of age, who was lagging behind a woman shabbily attired.

"Mother," said the girl, "I can't, indeed I can't walk faster, unless you let me have my shoes ; my feet are bleeding now, and the stones are so sharp I can scarcely stand."

"Just now," replied the woman, "you said your shoes hurt you ; you're always full of one fancy or the other: there, take 'em," she said, "and trampon quickly, or I'll——"

"I will, I will !" replied the girl, rubbing the tears from her eyes with the back of one hand, as she hurriedly pulled on the shoes with the other, "I will try to do everything you wish, if you will but be kinder to me."

"Kinder indeed ! a pretty deal I have to be kinder to you for," exclaimed the woman ; "why, you've caused me more trouble, than all the six husbands I have had put together. One's generally trouble enough for a woman ; but all mine, excepting the last, were what husbands ought to be, early croakers, and died off like gentlemen ; no waiting to be told to go. I buried three in one year ;" then speaking to herself, she said, "Bel's a tough 'un, but I shall see him out yet ; it won't be long before he calls here, at the half-way-house to the other world." As she said this, she turned her head significantly towards a large venerable looking pile—it was the Hospital of St. Giles's in the

Fields, where the condemned always took their last drink, on their way to execution at Tybourne.

The woman and the girl pursued their way until they arrived at a spot, fatal to many of their friends, the far-famed Tybourne Tree. Here stood, amongst others, one enormous tree, and near it the three-sided gallows. The woman looking up at it, said—"I could fill those three sides with jewels, that would hang there and be real ornaments to it; and perhaps I may yet, who knows?" It was an odd locality for such people to fix their camp in, but at some distance up the road, might be perceived through the trees, an old worn out caravan or two, that had seen better days, and had evidently been most attractive-looking articles at fairs, many years before.

"I'm glad we're at home," said the woman, as they approached a very old man, who was sitting upon the steps of one of the vans enjoying the rays of the setting sun, who, starting at her voice, looked up, evidently astonished at seeing her.

"What in the name of all the saints has brought you here to-day?" he said; to which the woman replied—

"Rather enquire in the name of all the devils, for there's no good in our visit, I can tell you! it's all along with that girl there."

The girl looked at the woman imploringly, as if, although unconscious of having done anything wrong, she feared a severe chastisement.

"Don't stand looking like a fool," said the woman to the girl, "I'm too tired to beat you now: take off your shoes, there's no need of wearing expensive articles when there's nothing to be got by it, and then to your shed, and mind you go to sleep, for sleepers can do well enough without eating. The girl left them, and doing as she was told, crept into the little gipsy sort of tent, where she began to cry and bewail her wretched fate.

"But what's gone wrong?" said the old man; "I

had not looked for you until to-morrow night at soonest.

"Plenty has gone wrong, but don't bother now," replied the woman.

"There is more wrong yet, for yonder I see one coming, who never, to my knowledge, left his platter while there was anything to be scraped off it."

And presently Downy was seen approaching, riding upon his jackass. He related the cause of his flight, for which he got heartily laughed at, and the woman exclaimed, "Why, Downy, you are a greater coward than you are a rogue, and that's saying something. Why, man, it was not for you the search was made, but better birds; but they moulted their plumage, and the hawks were all at fault."

Diddle 'em Downy did not exactly understand the meaning of her words, but felt that he had not only disgraced his name by being done, but had by his precipitate retreat lost a good day's engagement. It was too late now to grumble, and he was ashamed to go back, so he sat down and partook plentifully of the refreshments offered. They conversed for a time most affably upon the chances of success at the coming Uxbridge fair; and the woman, having plied Diddle 'em Downy plentifully with strong drinks, tried all her power of fascination and persuasion, to tempt him to break his engagement with their rival, with whom he was to perform at Uxbridge; but Downy, for reasons best known to himself, positively refused every offer the woman tendered, and having got all he wanted he fell asleep; and the old man and his daughter arose and left him where he lay, and retired into the van.

It was some time before Downy awoke. When he did get upon his legs, he shook himself once or twice, and perceiving that his friends had deserted him, he determined to take advantage of the cool of the night, and pursue his journey towards Uxbridge.

He had not been gone long before the woman, coming from the van, said, as she descended the steps—

"Father, keep a look out till I return; I grow more anxious every minute. I'll walk and meet him—the Clipper's not the punctual chap he used to be; he's either got drunk, or there's more mischief in the wind." And she sauntered along towards London.

As her form vanished in the imperfect light of the moon, the girl crept from her tent, and having anxiously watched the woman's departure, approached the van, and ascending to the door, knocked gently, and whispered, "Grandfather, mother's gone." The door opened, and the old man appearing, said half kindly, half pettishly, "Child, child, you'll get me into sad trouble one of these days."

"Oh, grandfather," replied the girl, "you are the only being on earth now, who is kind to me; and I am so hungry, mother has not given me a morsel to-day."

"Your mother says," replied the old man, "that if she overfeeds you she shall make you fat, and spoil your beauty."

"I often pray to heaven that I could myself spoil what you call my beauty, for then I think mother would turn me adrift."

The old man turned into the caravan, and brought out some little dainty bits he had kept aside purposely for her, unknown to any one. "There, child, you see I had not forgotten you; come up and sit on the top step, and then we shall see more easily when your mother is returning."

The girl sitting down beside the old man, for a moment forgot all her troubles and seemed quite happy.

The old man watched the child with great attention, and sighing, said to himself, "Poor thing, were I not so old, so feeble, so dependent, you should not want a friend to save you; but were I to—they would murder me—no, no."

The girl having speedily finished her meal, looked up in the old man's face with anxiety, and said, "Why are you so serious, grandfather? you are seldom thus when we are alone."

The old man, arousing himself from his thoughtful mood, replied, "Oh, child, I fear there's plenty of cause for our being serious—do *you* know what has happened?"

"All I know," said the girl, "is, that to-day just as I was being shown dressed in all my finery, as Venus, there was a frightful screaming in our booth, and such a confusion created, that the curtain was closed, and every one was running about in alarm. Presently, mother came hurrying up to me; she was biting her lips and looking as white as ashes, and taking hold of my clothes began to pull them off; she told Sarah, the tight rope girl, to put them on; and then she herself changed dresses with Slopsy Sal; and Ray, the Clipper, too, was at the same time slipping off his beautiful green and gold dress, and as mother dragged me out the backway, I saw him putting the green and gold on ugly Tom. We hurried away on our road here, and that's all I know about it, grandfather—but there must be something wrong."

"There has been very little right, child, since the night you were brought to us. You have forgotten that time, I suppose?"

"No, no, no!" said the girl, beginning to cry bitterly, "I shall never, never, forget it. And oh, mother did beat me so, the other day; she beat me till she thought she had killed me, only because, as we were coming from Rochester, I peeped from the window of the van, to try and see the house in which, when I was a very little child, I was so happy. Oh, grandfather, how cruel it was of that fine lady on the Bridge to turn me away, when she found her own child. She always told me *I* was her own, and I loved her as my life, and she used to say she loved me; and then there was the gentleman I called my father, I loved him too; and then there was Edward—oh, I shall die, grandfather, I shall die if I think of it."

The poor girl cast her head in despair upon the bosom of the old man, and wept as though her young

heart were bursting. The old man wept too, and was working himself up to have courage to tell the child all he knew, when he saw his daughter returning. A word was enough to stop the child's tears, and make her fly to her retreat beneath the shed, or rather the old covering of a tilt cart, that formed her tent, the old man at the same time retiring with equal precipitation into the van.

The woman came on in no very good humour; she mumbled, and grumb'ed, and growled, and then approached the girl's tent, into which she peeped; but the child was so far schooled in dissimulation, that the sleep she feigned quite satisfied the woman that she was safe and at rest. Presently she heard a sort of ploughman's whistle in the distance, and soon afterwards a countryman came jogging along the road; of him she asked if, as he had come that way, he had seen a man answering the description she gave him.

"What shou'd I want to see a mon for?" said the countryman; "I seed no mon, not boiy!" and again beginning to whistle a rustie air, he moved on. He had scarcely gone a dozen paces, ere he turned round, and bursting into a loud laugh, called out, "What, Nan, girl—not know your Clipper?—then I must be well disguised, i'faith."

"Is it really you, Ray?" said the woman; "but I'd swear it was by that laugh. I think you would joke if you were going to be hanged, as old Sir Thomas More did when he had his head cut off—but why this disguise?"

"Why? I should think you could guess. It wasn't likely I should wish to be recognised by young Osborne as one of his dear friends of the marsh, was it?"

Just as he had uttered these words, a portion of the woollen covering of the gipsy tent, under which the girly lay, was slowly raised.

Between the spot where they stood and the girl's tent, lay the trunk of a large tree; they both sat down

upon the ground, and rested their backs against it. The child listened anxiously, for she had caught the name of Osborne, and her heart was throbbing with the thoughts of days now gone.

"Now, tell me," said the woman, "how matters have gone since the morning?"

"Well, you know," said Ray, "you were, as you always are, right to a tittle. You should have been a queen, Nan, for damn me, if any rascally ministers, or bamboozling ambassadors, would have thrown dust in your eyes." Not half an hour elapsed, before, sure enough, all the Hewets were upon us. I had popped on this innocent disguise, that if they did come, as you said they would, I might look 'em boldly in the face, and see myself which way the cat might jump. In came Master Hewet and Osborne, and their principal witness, that minx Flora Gray. I've marked her, for her share in the business, I can tell her. Oh, you would have split your sides, had you seen the falling of their chops, when bandy-legged Sarah, the rope girl, stood forth as Venus. That was a glorious hit of yours; but I must own I did not feel very much flattered, when Osborne, as he looked at ugly Tom, in my green and gold, seemed to have great doubts whether that ugly rascal was not myself. Flora was the only one not easily to be done; with half an eye she saw that Slopsy Sal was not my beautiful Nan; and the go wouldn't have ended as it did, had not all our troop, man, woman, and child, sworn her out of countenance: for better safety, I ordered the show to be struck at once—it will be here soon. But, Nan, although what is past may be a joke, what's to come may not be one. I have seen *him* to-day, that I would I had never seen. I have seen your husband."

"Spikely!" exclaimed the woman, "did he see you?"

"No, and I hope he never may. It's my belief that if he did not so thoroughly hate Hewet himself, and could fix the stealing of the child entirely on you,

without confessing his own share as the planner of the scheme, he'd blow the whole affair to revenge himself on you. They tell me it was the child's real mother who screamed out so lustily, and had nearly ruined us all, but they believe her mad, so it may blow over, and we hear no more about it."

"We must have been mad ourselves, I think," said the woman, "to go so near the lion's den; but who would have guessed that the girl Anne Hewet could have been recognised—a mother's eyes alone could have had the sharpness to penetrate such a blinding mist as we had thrown round her: but we must show her no more; her beauty must be turned to a different account; my uncle, the smuggler from Antwerp, is in the river; he shall take her abroad; she'll be worth her weight in gold there, and we be safe by her absence."

The distant jingling of bells which announced the approach of the carts and vans containing the remainder of the troop and all their worldly treasures put a stop to their farther discourse.

Instead of pitching their tents for the night where they then were, it was thought advisable, in consequence of information brought by Ug'y Tom, that they should, as speedily as possible, move as far as they could from the vicinity of London. All was now bustle and preparation for the continuance of their midnight journey.

"Come, Venus, jump up," said Ugly Tom, giving the tent a kick with his foot to wake her, "get up, or you'll perhaps have your beauty spoilt, by getting one of the ribs of the tilt stuck in your eye."

"And serve her right too," said one of the Graces, who always thought she herself ought to have been the Venus.

"Up with it," said Ray the Copper, to the men who were holding the tilt ready to lift it, the moment the girl was from underneath, "up with it, and if she will keep her eyes shut, damn me, but I'll open 'em

with a cut or two of this whip!" The men lifted the tilt, when to their amazement they found the girl was gone!

"What," exclaimed Nan, "gone, impossible!—I saw her lying there not an hour ago, sound asleep. Anne! Anne!" she called out, "hither instantly, or I'll flay you alive, if you come any of your tricks on me."

They all listened, and a general hunt began, for they thought she must be close at hand—but nowhere could they find her. Wider and wider became the circuit of their search.

Spikely's wife became more and more alarmed, as the darkness increased; every lantern they could muster was brought into use. Every tree and bush was examined, but all to no purpose. One by one they all returned with the same announcement of ill-success; the last that came in was the old man, who told them a rambling story about his having, he was sure, seen a ghost—he said, "he had strayed on and on, until he found himself standing exactly in the centre of the three-sided gallows at Tybourne Tree—it was there that he had seen a figure flit by, and vanish into the road that led to Edgware."

"Fool!" exclaimed his daughter, "you should have told us that at once—ghost indeed, it was the girl herself. Ray, mount and after her! if she escapes—but you know her value."

The Clipper and Ugly Tom took the two best horses of their stud, and mounting them, hurried away as fast as such steeds could carry them, diagonally across the country, so that by coming out some way up the Edgware-road, they might cut off her escape. Having at last reached the main way, they placed themselves on either side of the road, and then slowly and quietly as they could, crept along towards Tybourne, expecting every moment to meet the surprised and affrighted fugitive.

Careful as they were, their search, however, proved

unsuccessful. When they had come down the road as far as Tybourne Tree they again halted, uncertain what to do, neither of them liking to face the tigress, Nan—"I wish the fiends had swallowed the girl," said Ray, savagely, "before she had found her way among us: I was ever against it."

"Against what?" enquired Ugly Tom; "there's always been some mystery hanging about that girl, that makes one more than half suspect she's not Nan's child at all. Come Ray, speak out; isn't she the merchant's daughter? Come, tell us who and what she is?"

"Ask Nan yourself," replied the Clipper.

"Yes!" said the other, "and be answered by her teeth instead of her tongue. Not I, i'faith."

They stood beneath the tree for a few minutes, and then, with reluctant steps, made their way to their companions.

Nan and the Clipper went some distance from the rest, and argued the best course to pursue. As the girl knew their intention to visit Uxbridge Fair, it was settled, that they should immediately alter their route, and push on to St. Albans in the way to Dunstable, and so on by short journeys, exhibiting a day here, and a day there, fill up the time until the great fair at Bedford. The instant the plan was determined upon, the whole camp, as it might be called, broke up, and forming the line, began to retrace their way to Tybourne Tree, round which they passed, and turning round sharply to the left, entered Edgware Road, where we will now leave them to pursue their weary way.

CHAPTER XVI.

FATHER BRASSINJAW IN THE CAGE.

Joy of this world for time will not abide;
From day to night it changeth as the tide.

CHAUCER.

EXACTLY at the time we are writing of, there were two men, the one in London, the other in Westminster, whose minds were equally torn to shreds by perplexities and doubts, as to what would be the best, that is the most agreeable manner in which they should each employ his future life; both were now their own masters; both had the world before them; both had a peculiar love for *self*—the one was King Henry the Eighth, the other the saintly Father Brassinjaw.

Henry was at this time confined to his palace by growing infirmities, which gave him ample time, but not much temper, for reflection. Brassinjaw, in like manner, had equal time, and quite as little temper, for reflection, by being confined in the cage on London Bridge. This cage was a sort of sentry-box-shaped building, and being elevated upon several stone steps, the passer-by had a good view of the prisoners within, and the prisoners within had a good bantering from the people without.

Henry was reclining upon a low couch, supported by cushions of amber satin, listening to his favourite, Cromwell, as he descanted upon two of the most pleasing subjects that ever fell upon the ear of Henry the Eighth—MONEY and MARRIAGE.

With respect to the first of these, he was relating with what success his two commissioners, Spikely and Horton, had assisted in despoiling the shrine of Thomas à Becket at Canterbury; two immense coffers

had been filled with gold and jewels, each of them so heavy that it took no less than eight strong men to lift.

The King chuckled as he thought of the treasure the two coffers from Canterbury would place at his immediate command ; and when Cromwell drew forth a list of suppressed Abbeys, and other religious houses, and stated in detail that no less than six hundred and forty-four convents, ninety colleges, two thousand three hundred and seventy-four chantries and free chapels, with one hundred and ten hospitals, were now annexed to the crown, his delight knew no bounds. It was at this moment the King dropped a hint to Cromwell, that he saw no reason why, one day or other, his trusty and well-beloved Privy-seal should not become the Earl of Essex.

The King had now been a widower for nearly two years, Queen Jane having died twelve days after the birth of her son Edward, in October 1537. It had been his own fault, that he had thus long remained single, but the difficulty was to fix upon a judicious choice. Ever since the death of Jane, the Protestant party had been decidedly losing ground.

Gardiner, Bishop of Winchester, had wheedled himself into the good graces of the King ; and being the most zealous of Papists, was subsequently the sworn enemy of Cromwell. Both were equally deep, both equally unscrupulous, as to the means employed to render their party triumphant. Each knowing how great was the influence a wife possessed over their master, as long as he liked her, they were both anxious that he should again marry ; the one sought for a Roman Catholic Princess, the other a Princess of the reformed religion ; and it was to this subject, of vital importance to himself, that Cromwell now led the conversation.

It was at this opportunity that Cromwell told the King he had just received the miniature of one of the greatest beauties in the world, the lovely Anne of

Cleves, sister of the reigning Duke of Cleves, a Protestant, and that her "education, *sobriety*, and morals were excellent." Then drawing forth the miniature, by Lucas, the court painter of Cleves, he presented it to the enraptured eyes of his Grace.

Henry, who could fall in love in five minutes, at once looked upon the fair face of Anne, as that of his future wife. But to be perfectly secure upon the point of her beauty, it was settled, that Hans Holbein should start immediately to the court of the Duke of Cleves, and return with a correct portrait of the beautiful Anne.

Cromwell hugged himself at the success of his new scheme, but this well-laid plan proved to be the rocky strand upon which his whole venture was wrecked and lost, for when the King saw Anne of Cleves, which he did in secret, she was so unlike the portraits he had received, that he at once took a loathing to her. Cromwell, as may be supposed, received the whole weight of his indignation: the favourite attempted to excuse the act, by reminding Henry that he had himself desired his minister to find him a "fine large woman." "Yes," said the King, "a fine large woman, but I did not tell you to bring me a Flanders mare."

We will now return to Father Brassinjaw. It appeared that poor Brassinjaw had been degraded from his office in the chapel upon the Bridge, for having been discovered picking out the real diamond eyes from one of the images; and having uttered some rather offensive expressions against the most religious Henry, he had been surprised to discover himself suddenly left for hours in the public cage.

"Once a priest, always a priest," said he to himself; "but of what use is it, if we can no longer get anything by it? I've a great mind to be revenged by changing my creed altogether; but what creed shall I take to? that's a ticklish question."

And he set himself to the solution of this ticklish

question. Chance enabled him to decide, for the public crier came to announce that the late landlord of the Cardinal's Hat, there upon the Bridge, having been hanged, the whole concern, including the goodwill of that "highly respectable house," was to be sold "*by the candle.*"

The moment Brassinjaw heard the announcement he exclaimed, "The prophecy shall be fulfilled! It was always foretold that one day I should possess a Cardinal's Hat, and now, cost what it will, that Cardinal's Hat shall cover this virtuous head; it shall be mine. Yes," he continued, in a tone of great determination, "yes, I will relinquish the SPIRITUAL, for a SPIRITUOUS calling. I will become a publican and——" he was just going to add "sinner," but seeming to feel that he would be understood without expressing it, he said no more.

When he was permitted to leave the cage, Brassinjaw at once hurried towards the Cardinal's Hat, to examine more minutely into his intended purchase.

Not a nook or corner did he leave unexamined. There were some odd things connected with this house, which, to any but one who had had such a thorough schooling in the mysteries of deception and underhand proceedings as Father Brassinjaw, might have been overlooked, or passed by heedlessly. There was not a single room, in the partitions of which there were not holes, through which those in the next apartment might easily witness all that passed.

Brassinjaw, observing this, and being alone at the time, commenced to examine every panel of the wainscot, and found that more than one were made to slip aside, and leave an opening large enough for a man to pass, and secretly enter, room after room, all over the dwelling. Observing a trap-door near one of the tables, he took hold of the ring, and raising it, had nearly tumbled headlong through, from alarm, at finding it opened over the waters, which were at that moment dashing madly down the falls beneath

the Bridge. Examining the trap-door, to see whether it was strong enough to be left over such a dangerous outlet, he found the hinges constructed in such a manner that would allow them to bend equally well both ways, so that, but for a couple of iron bolts protruding from the opposite side of the opening, the trap would, when lowered, fall downwards. Upon further examination, he discovered that these bolts too were moveable, and could be pushed back, although they were held forward by a spring.

Having once caught the idea, he began to think that if these bolts were made to move, there was, doubtless, some method by which their movement might be accomplished, without going beneath, and forcing them back with the hand. And having pulled up a floor plank, he discovered two ropes attached to the bolts, which, passing beneath the floor, entered the adjoining room. He carefully replaced the board, and in the next apartment he found an empty cupboard, at the bottom of which were two round apertures, through which the ropes had evidently at one time passed. In the back of this cupboard he also perceived chinks and holes, so disposed, that a person shut in the cupboard could observe everything that passed in the other room.

All these discoveries, far from alarming Brassinjaw, made him more determined than ever to become the possessor of the Cardinal's Hat.

Having once made up his mind to revolutionize his mode of living, he thought the first thing to be done was to change his outward man.

"First, I'll to the tailor," said Brassinjaw; "my present habiliments are but illsuited to the tapster's trade, though his and mine are not so widely differing as silly people think; the business of both of us is to intoxicate the mind, and make men fools." The more he worked up his own mind to the change he intended to make, the more did he try to believe that his new calling was the *honest* of the two; and

certainly as he had exercised his mis-called holy power, perhaps, the publican would prove the lesser sinner.

As Master Thomas Stow, of Aldgate, was a tailor of no mean repute, our saintly father bled him thither, where he found the old man, spectacles on nose, his boy beside him, both hard at work; and, as before, the elder Stow soundly scolding the younger, for thinking more of old musty tomes, than he ever did of jackets, jerkins, slops, or hose.

The cause of Horton's visit had not more surprised the old tailor, than did the announcement made by Brassinjaw, that he "lacked a comely suit of newest cut," and, odd enough for an intended publican, he desired it might be made of "some right *sober* colour."—we fear it would be the only part about him that would remain sober, if once he took possession of the Cardinal's Hat.

The old tailor took off his spectacles, wiped them, and then put them on again, and looking full in the face of Brassinjaw, he exclaimed with surprise, "Why, holy father, I should have as much expected to have seen Saint Thomas à Becket himself, rest his holy bones, walk in upon such an errand, as Father Brassinjaw."

"And I should have as soon expected," replied Brassinjaw, "to have seen so wise a tailor, as Master Stow is known to be, swallow his own goose to cure an indigestion, as to have heard him call that rascally rebel, à Becket, a saint! Why, know you not, man, that our most religious King, in his great wisdom, has found out, what any other fool—I mean *any* fool, might have done for the last four hundred years, that à Becket was but a counterfeit saint. And now, Master Stow, know that if you would keep your ears to yourself, you had better keep your tongue so too, and never call à Becket saint again."

"I never thought him one!" exclaimed the old tailor, falling in a moment into the humour of the times, "I never thought him one, and it always went

against my stomach, as I let the lie slip off my tongue when I said he was. But now, Father Brassinjaw ———”

“Father! father me no more!” said Brassinjaw: “when I put on thy new doublet, I put off the old priest. So father me no more.”

“But prithee, what in the name of the saints has wrought this wondrous change in thee?” enquired the old tailor.

“The times, man, the times! the badness of the times!” replied Brassinjaw, sticking out his two arms quite straight, until he looked like a fat letter T.

As the old tailor began to measure him, he continued—“All trades, Master Stow, have their ups and downs; no firm ever lasted for ever, howsoever carefully it might have been conducted—let the sleeves be large and puffed—perhaps we, of our craft, ought not to complain, for we carried on a roaring trade for some hundreds of years—there was no lack of pickings, Master Stow, there was no lack of pickings—let my money-pouch be wide and deep—and now, Master Stow,” he said, as he found the old tailor upon both his knees, measuring his legs, “tell me, man, what think you will best become my style of figure—the olden slops, and tight-drawn hose, or a neat pair of the new-fangled trousers!”

“With such a calf as thine,” replied the old tailor, at the same time holding out about three quarters of a yard of the measure, which he had just taken from around Brassinjaw’s leg, “with such a calf as thine it were a sin, a downright sin, to hide a morsel of your legs beneath those silly things called trousers.”

“Ay, well, then,” replied Brassinjaw, “let it be the slops and hose. And now, good Master Stow, what’s stirring in the world?”

“Stirring!” exclaimed the old tailor, suddenly becoming quite excited; “stirring! marry the whole world is stirring methinks, thanks to that villain

Cromwell—it's no use checking me—he is a villain, and there is but one still greater, and that is his minion, Harry Horton—he told me I should one day remember him, and I don't think it likely I shall ever forget him or his master either."

"But why this fury?" enquired Brassinjaw; "what has Lord Cromwell done to thee?"

"Done!" replied the other; he has *undone* me. You know my pretty house, and pretty garden, behind Throgmorton Street? that house abutted upon the palings of Lord Cromwell's grounds. He thought a tailor, I suppose, too mean a neighbour to be so close to a dirty b'acksmith's son, so coveted a portion of my land; but I loved my garden as my life, and swore I'd never part with it. Now, would you believe it, or can you picture my surprise, when on reaching my home the other night, I found that Lord Cromwell had pulled down the pales, had undermined the foundations of my house, had placed it on huge rollers, and having wheeled it some two-and-twenty feet, there set it down again; a wall was then built up, and I was robbed of twenty and two feet of my own garden ground!"

Strange as this circumstance may appear, it is no more atrange than true.

The tears quite came into the eyes of the old tailor, as he recounted his wrongs, which he laid entirely to the spite of Horton, whom, he said, "he was sure had put the fancy into Lord Cromwell's mind."

"Oh! then," said Brassinjaw, "you too have a small account to settle with Horton, have ye. I have one heavier perhaps than yours, but leave it to me, Master Stow, leave it to me, and I'll get payment, with interest too, for both of us. I never let *my* hawks fly until I am sure they can strike their game—so be not in a hurry—but you *shall* be paid to your heart's content; this I promise, and I'll keep my word. And now, Master Stow, know ye any one deeply skilled in the mystery of barbery? Some

cunning wight who can make a nostrum that shall cause one's hair to grow both quick and thick?"

The old tailor said he could not answer for the truth of what he had heard, but that it was reported that, at that very moment, there was to be found in the fair, the very man his new customer required—"Yes," he said, "it is reported so wonderful is the power of this extraordinary pomade that an old lady mistaking it for lip salve, rubbed it over her upper lip, when, in less than three days, she had a pair of moustachios, of such prolific growth, that she has been obliged to shave twice a day ever since!" Having said this, the old man looked at Brassinjaw from under his spectacles, as much as to say—"What do you think of that?"

"That's my man!" exclaimed Brassinjaw, who having impressed upon the old tailor's mind that not a moment was to be lost in finishing his new habiliments, at once hurried off to the fair.

CHAPTER XVII.

A MIDNIGHT VISITOR.

in less than in an hour
Shall all be drench'd, so hideous in the shower.

CHAUCER.

THE night on which the fair closed, turned out wet and melancholy; the wind whistled mournfully beneath the arches of the Bridge, and the creaking sign-boards, as they swung slowly backwards and forwards, sent forth a wailing sound that seemed like the voices of weeping spirits, sighing o'er the dead.

While Flora was endeavouring to amuse her poor mistress, by telling fairy tales, and chanting the prettiest ditties of the day, the wind became louder

and louder. At every blast, Alyce started—her countenance beaming with hope, for nothing could convince her but, that each sound she heard was the voice of her child. Every few minutes Flora was compelled to open the casement and look out; and Alyce would exclaim, "There, there! I heard her plainly. Oh! do, do let her come to me that I may see her."

As the night advanced, the wind and rain increased, and anxiously did Flora await the return of her master, with Edward and the Bridge-shooter; for, until the merchant came, she knew it were useless to endeavour to get Alyce to retire to rest. Her complaint had taken a perfectly new turn; instead of remsin- ing for hours, nay days, without moving or speaking, she was now ever restless, ever talking.

The bell of Saint Paul had struck ten—another hour passed—the eleventh hour was heard, but still the merchant came not. Flora, just as the clock was striking the midnight hour, heard Master Hewet and his companions entering the house. Alyce started, and running towards the door of the apartment, would not believe but that her husband had brought home her child.

"To-morrow, to-morrow, dear Alyce," said the merchant, to pacify her, but he could not disguise from himself, how hopeless were his promises. He told Flora, that from circumstances they had that day heard, there was a chance of having their doubts resolved. The sudden disappearance of the monster show, a day before the closing of the fair, looked suspicious. Hewet had, he said, sent one of his most trusty men, one who had known the child from her birth, to follow the show from place to place, as, in all probability, when the parties were away from London, and off their guard, they would again employ the child as before. The mountebanks had gone, it was said, to Uxbridge, so his spy had that night started upon their track.

As they were about to retire to rest, they all shuddered at hearing a sound, the meaning of which they knew full well; it was that of some poor drowning wretch, struggling against the pitiless waters of the cataracts beneath the Bridge—such accidents were almost of daily occurrence; they crossed themselves, and mentally offering up a prayer for the soul of him, who had at that moment gone to another world, they took their lamps, and retired to their various chambers.

Edward had just entered his own dormitory, when he remembered that he had not secured the outer door, so once more descending, he placed his hand upon the bolt, when he fancied he heard a moan! He started; then looked around; but thinking it must have been merely the sighing of the wind, he proceeded to finish his task, when the moan again struck upon his ear, more sadly than before; he could not imagine whence the sound proceeded. He listened—all was still—again he listened; when suddenly his doubts were doubts no longer; the person in distress, he now felt sure, was lying near the door—he opened it—the rush of the wind nearly extinguished his lamp. In another moment, those above were frightfully alarmed at hearing Edward calling aloud, as if it had gone mad; they hurried down, where they saw Osborne kneeling by some helpless human being.

Hewet flew to lend his assistance, when who can paint the scene which followed, for in another moment the merchant was holding in his arms his own, his long lost child!

So suddenly, so unexpectedly had this happiness burst upon the merchant, that he gave himself no time for reflection, but at once hurried with his precious load into the presence of his wife, exclaiming—"Alyce, Alyce, God be thanked, for he has heard our prayer, she is here!"

Had Hewet thought for an instant of the overpowering effect, that such an unprepared restoration of the child might have had upon his wife, he would

not have dared this venture; but it was done, and he now trembled for the consequence.

So strangely had Alyce been working upon her own shattered mind, that when she embraced her child, she did so, certainly with all the true feeling of a doting mother, but without any approach to that overwhelming burst of joy and wonder, that might have been looked for in ordinary cases.

"I told you, William," she said, "I told you, she would return, often have I heard her gentle voice, whispering into my ear in the dead of night—'Weep not, mother; weep not for me—for I am safe; I will return; did you not say so, Anne? did you not whisper those words of hope into your mother's ear? But for that hope, I had gone mad—I had gone mad.'"

The child was so overcome with fatigue and suffering, with fear, hope, wonder, joy, that for a time she neither saw nor heard what passed around her. All she did was to cling round the neck of her mother, and sobbing, repeat again and again—"Are you not my mother?—my real, real, mother? Oh, tell me you are, or kill me—kill me!"

Flora did not hesitate for a moment to give way to *her* feelings, so supporting herself in the corner of the room, she roared out lustily.

Edward and the Bridge-shooter stood looking at each other very stoically, as much as to say, "Will you cry? I won't, if you don't?" But in spite of all their contortions of visage, and sundry little gulps, a vast deal more of the heart's dew would hang about their eyelids, than they were willing, or would have allowed, to be seen there.

Again and again did the child cling, first to the neck of her mother, then to that of the merchant; when presently, turning and seeing Flora standing with open arms, she quite screamed with joy, and flew into them; their embrace was mutually loving and sincere. She laughed and cried both, as she embraced her childhood's playmate, Edward, but checked herself suddenly

as she was going to bestow the same endearment upon Flora's lover, in whom she fancied she saw a perfect stranger; the Bridge-shooter she only remembered in his rags and tatters.

Poor William felt quite hurt that he should not be recognised, so blubbered out—"Why, don't you know me, Mistress Anne? and have you quite forgotten poor ragged Billy-the-bridge-shooter?"

"No, no; indeed I have not!" said Anne, running to him, "it was you who taught dear Edward how to save my life—bless you, bless you!"

William was so delighted, that he seized up the child, and completely swung her round, as he kissed her. When he put her down again, he said, "Mother is a witch—upon my life I'm afraid she is—she has always said that little Anne, for that's what she calls Mistress Anne, would start up when we least expected it, and I'm sure we least expected it such an awful night as this. I hope she may prove a witch in everything;" then whispering to Flora, he said, "for she tells me that our dear mistress there, will yet be wiser than ever, now she has no holy father near her; that's wicked though, isn't it?"

"I'm not quite sure," replied Flora, in a like whisper; the truth was, Flora had become a little tainted with the coming protestantism of the day, and therefore eyed the old-fashioned priestcraft with a rather doubting glance.

When the first burst of joy and astonishment had in a degree subsided, they began to turn their thoughts to the arrangements for the night. It was at once settled, that until the morning, no questions should be put to little Anne, as they still called her, concerning what had happened to her since her abduction, three years before. This was a sore trial to all, for all were burning with curiosity. But the child's care-worn look, and the state of her feet, which they now, for the first time, perceived were partially bandaged up in rags, and other parts bare, and torn by wander-

ing over the rough and rugged roads, induced them to conclude that the sooner she could be consigned to sleep's soothing care the better.

As Anne was to pass that night with her mother, the first for three long years, it was arranged that Edward should resign his room to the merchant, and himself take up his quarters in Horton's former dormitory.

Horton's old room had, in a certain degree, changed its appearance very much since he had last seen it; in fact, it had been made the magazine of warlike arms, belonging to the peaceful garrison of Hewet's citadel of the Golden Fleece!

The truth was, that ever since the Pope's bull of excommunication against Henry had been promulgated, which bull had been long before prepared, but had been kept back *in terrorum*, until his Holiness should be quite convinced that Henry was an incorrigible and disobedient son of Rome—warlike preparations had been going on throughout the King's dominions. As many of our readers may have often heard of excommunications, without perhaps being aware of the charitable wording of such works, we will give an extract, and leave it to their own minds to decide, whether such document was not more beseeching the invention of a fiend, than becoming the Christian feelings of Heaven's Viceregent, as the Pope professed himself to be.

The Bishop being clothed in white, and accompanied by other priests belonging to the church, with uplifted cross and candles burning, stood up in the pulpit, and said, "By the authority of God the Father Almighty, and of the blessed Virgin Mary and all the Saints, we excommunicate, and anathematise and deliver over to the devil all the aforesaid malefactors, that excommunicated, anathematised, and delivered over to the devil they may be:—*Accursed be they in towns, in fields, in highways, in footpaths, under roofs, out of doors, and in all other places, standing, sitting, lying down, rising up, walking, running, awake, asleep, eating,*

drinking, and doing whatsoever other thing ; from all illumination, and all other good things of the church we debar them ; to the devil we condemn them ; and in the pains of hell-fire we extinguish their souls—unless they truly repent and make SATISFACTION, even as this candle is extinguished." And so having said, to strike the more terror, amidst the sounding of bells he put out the light.

Although Henry the Eighth lived in an age which had become sufficiently enlightened to allow kings to smile at such impotent blasphemy, there had been times when such denunciations would bring the mightiest potentates crouching bare-headed, bare-footed, on their hands and knees, to supplicate at the foot of the Pope, his intercession with Heaven, to remove such a curse.

Henry had the courage to set the Pope and all his Bulls at defiance ; but as it was currently reported, and believed too, that Charles V. Emperor of Germany, and Francis I. King of France, had determined, at the intercession of the Pope, to head a league against this land, the King, in order to raise a feeling of security in the minds of the citizens of London, and give an appearance of preparation to enemies abroad, had commanded that all males between sixteen and sixty years of age should be at once enrolled, and exercised in the discipline of war.

This circumstance accounts for Horton's old room being greatly changed in appearance ; for the walls were everywhere hung with accoutrements of one sort or another.

The merchant Hewet was a captain of archers ; and Edward, with William-the-Bridge-shooter, two of his men ; and very proud the two latter were, when they appeared in public armed to their teeth.

Before Edward retired to his couch, he amused himself for some time in examining the various arms. He greatly admired his master's sword, which was adorned after the Asiatic fashion, that is, *damasquinée*,

or inlaid with gold—an adornment lately introduced into Europe by Benvenuto Cellini. In examining his own dag, or tacke, or, in other words, a pistol—the only difference between a pistol and a tacke was, that the former had a knob at the end, whilst the butt of the latter was cut in a slanting direction—in pretending to go through the practice of loading these fire-arms, Edward discovered that one of the dags was still charged.

“Well,” said he, as he laid the weapon down on a chest near his bed, “it must remain so, I suppose, until the morning, for if I fire it from the window, it may alarm, not only our house, but the neighbours too.”

And turning his mind upon the strange reappearance of his former playmate, Anne, he prepared to go to rest.

“Poor child!” he said, “what a miserable plight was she in. Hers will be a marvellous tale, I suspect. I’m longing for to-morrow.”

Edward threw himself upon his couch, where he lay for some time, turning over and over in his mind all the strange events of the last three years: as he became more and more drowsy, the dreadful night of the marsh came, in all the vivid colouring of a dream, before his mind’s eye: he started wide awake, for he had experienced that very peculiar sensation, not uncommon between waking and sleeping, of suddenly falling from a great height. The light of the moon was beginning to shine, although faintly, in at the little window. Feeling quite unnerved by the impression his dreamy thoughts had made upon his mind, he covered his head up with the bed-clothes, and tried to compose his nerves in the forgetfulness of sleep. Just when forgetfulness was exerting her power over memory, he was startled by a strange sort of creaking, wrenching noise; he listened—and raising the clothes from his head, he felt convinced it came from that part of the room in which the

window was placed. He now recollected the former attempt at robbery which had actually been made in that very room; he slowly raised his head until he could see the window; the night was still hazy, but sufficient light was in the heavens to render the window very apparent: presently he saw a hand holding a wrenching-tool rise up; the tool was applied to the casement, which had, ever since the former attempt, been kept securely fastened. Osborne blessed the chance which had left him the loaded weapon; he seized it firmly in his grasp, and remained quietly watching the progress the robber was making, determined not to stir until he could take his aim with certainty and effect: he was not long kept in anxious suspense, for the thief appeared to be so thoroughly a master of his trade, that in a very few minutes the casement gave way, and turned back upon its hinges. Osborne now trembled, not with fear, but from a strange feeling that in another minute, perhaps, he should have sent an erring human being to his dread account; a moment more and he would have started up to alarm the robber, and thus enable him to escape, but ere he could determine upon which course to pursue, the head of a man was seen above the sill of the window; bang went the pistol; one cry was heard; and then the heavy dash of some one falling into the flood beneath.

Edward sprang from his bed, intending to fly to the casement, but was suddenly checked by striking his foot against something sharp in the floor, which cut his foot severely. As soon as the first shock of pain was past, he limped to the window; but nothing could he there discover, excepting the rope which Horton so long before had placed there for his own purposes. He drew that into the room; then hastened to the door, intending to acquaint his master with what had happened; and whom, with the other inmates of the dwelling, he doubted not must be already alarmed,

Not hearing the least noise in the house, he believed, which was the truth, that all but himself still slept; so he determined not to disturb them. He again closed his door—barred up the window in the strongest way he could; and having not only loaded his own brace of dogs, he loaded those belonging to William as well. He placed them in a row before him on the bed; then, resting his back against the wall at the head of his couch, passed the remainder of the night in watching.

CHAPTER XVIII.

ANNE HEWET'S NARRATIVE.

At meate was she well ytaught withal;
She let no morsel from her lippes fall:
Ne wet her fingers in her saucè deep.
Well could she carry a morsel, and well keep,
That no drop ne fell upon her breast.

CHAUCER.

FLORA and the Bridge-shooter were up by times, and never did two lovers—for they now no longer disguised their affections from each other—go to work with such happy hearts as they did while preparing for the family breakfast.

When Edward entered, he related what had passed during the night, and showed them a sharp piece of steel which he had discovered stuck deeply into the floor of Horton's room, by which his foot had been severely cut when he rushed to the casement after firing. It was evidently the point of a knife or dagger, and was stained with rust, or something that looked more like blood.

Osborne was about to throw it into the river, when William said it would do capitally for him to scratch out the blots he was always making in his copy-books;

so taking it from Edward, he carefully placed it in his pouch.

The merchant, accompanied by Alyce and her long lost child, soon made their appearance; and never, perhaps, did a happier household sit down to a morning meal than did the Hewets that morning. This was soon dispatched, for all were anxious to hear Anne tell the story of her abduction and of her sufferings,—and at the earnest entreaty of all her friends she began:—

“Ah,” she said, “how often used I to dream of this dear room, and then awake with my eyes streaming with tears: how I used to pray that I might one day, only for one day, be here again as I used to be; and now to think that I am really, really here!—or, perhaps, I am dreaming now—oh, Heaven grant that it be not a dream! Oh, do speak,” she said, “and tell me it is not a dream!—do say that you will never give me to that wicked woman again, who used to beat me so!”

“It is no dream,” replied the merchant. “But what mean you by praying of me not *again* to give you to that wicked woman? Did you not know that you had been stolen away?”

“Oh, no! I was made to believe,” replied Anne, “that I was really the child of that cruel woman, Nan.”

“Nan!” exclaimed every one present, inquiringly.

“Yes,” said the child, “Nan; she was always called Nan; I never heard any other name.”

“You remember,” she continued, turning towards Flora and Edward, “the woman who came here on that dreadful day, three years ago? Oh, that day!—never, never, shall I forget that day!” Anne, shuddering, cast a glance round the room, as if almost expecting to see the wretch lurking in some corner, ready to seize her—“That woman was Nan. She told you that she was to take me to my mother. You recollect how joyously I left the house with her, for I

thought she told me the truth. I sang and danced along across the Bridge, the woman holding fast by my hand. The moment we had quitted the Bridge, she turned suddenly down to the Bank-side, and along some miserable and dirty lanes. I began to cry with fear; she dragged me on violently, and, with horrid oaths, declared she would murder me if I did not instantly cease my howling. We went on and on, through places I had never seen before, to one more dark and horrible than any I had yet passed through—it was called the black arch of the Clink."

"I know it well," exclaimed William, "and a viler spot is not in this great kingdom."

"At that black arch," continued Anne Hewet, "there are three miserable dwellings; the entrance to one of them was by a rugged flight of stone steps; she dragged me up them on my back, for I had become so frightened, that I screamed and struggled to get away: but I was very little then, and she dragged me up as easily as if I had been a feather, for Nan was wonderfully strong. When she had me securely in the room above, she gave me a violent blow on the side of the head, and said, 'Now, mark me, if you cease not your bellowing, I'll strip your skin off as quickly as I do these clothes:' saying this, she began to tear off my things.

"'Where, where is my mother?' I screamed out. 'Here,' she said, 'here—I am your mother—the only mother that you will ever know.' 'No,' I said, 'you are not my mother; she's all goodness and kindness, she—' 'She has done with you,' she replied; 'and now know the truth—you were never Dame Hewet's child, but mine. I lent you to her when she had lost her own; but she has found her real daughter, and has returned you upon my hands; so now you know they have turned you off, you will learn to obey me, as a child should do, or—but you know the weight of my hand already, so dread it and be silent.'

"The woman soon stripped off all my good clothes,

and replaced them with complete rags; then making a fire, she burnt everything that had belonged to me. As she sat over the fire, I crept into a dark corner, and wept myself fast asleep. When I awoke, I found myself alone: the room was large and dark—all seemed in death-like silence; a few rays of the moon stole in at the broken window, which caused such strange forms on the walls and floor, that I screamed with fear. I found the door; it was fastened securely on the outside. I went to the casement; it was very high from the ground—not a sound was to be heard. I watched the moon; it must have been for hours; at last that sank, and I was in total darkness. Presently I heard a footstep approaching: I cared not who it might be, for it was so dreadful to be alone, that even the presence of my cruel mother, as I was now to believe that woman, seemed a blessing to be coveted: the door opened, and Nan came in.

“‘Has no one been?’ she said; ‘I expected them long ere this.’ Nan, lighting a lamp, took out some food from a basket she had brought with her, and placing it on the table gave me some, and desired me to take it with me to my bed, and after eating it, to go to sleep as speedily as I could. She pointed out a place under the stairs, that led to an upper room, in which was a little hay and straw—this was my bed.

In the middle of the night, Ray the Clipper, with two others, came to the Clink. I watched them from the dark place in which I lay beneath the stairs; now and then I caught some sound that was familiar to me. I heard your name, father, and Edward’s; and the tallest of the men, who, from his remarks, seemed to have a dreadful hatred to all in this house, was delighted when Nan pointed to the spot wherein I lay. At last they all ascended to the rooms above, and I, worn out with grief, fell into a deep slumber.

“The men remained there for some days, but from their anxious looks, and incessant watchings from the casement, it seemed to me that they were fearful of

being surprised. There were always mysterious nods, and winks, and signs going on between Nan and the Clipper. On the last day I was in that dreadful place, I heard above my head the whole four quarrelling and fighting. Presently Ray rushed down the stairs, his face covered with blood; he was pursued by the tall man, who, seizing him just as he had reached the door, hurled him headlong down the long steps. The woman, who was screaming above, and evidently endeavouring to overcome the other man, at last rushed down, frantic and foaming with rage. 'Have you murdered him?' she exclaimed. 'I hope I have,' was the tall man's reply; and snapping his fingers at Nan, he ascended to the upper floor.

"The woman bit her lips, until I saw the blood come from them; and, turning suddenly to where I was crouching in fear, she seized me by the hand, and said, 'Come, come with me—this day shall end my slavery; my heart is now fixed, fixed as a rock—and he shall find it hard as one, or I will tear it out from my breast, and——But come, come; life or death may hang upon my speed.' I felt relieved at the chance of any change, and as I knew how useless it would be to oppose her, I started up, and with her hurried from the place. We entered beneath the black arch, and found Ray seated upon a stone, stanching the blood which flowed from a dreadful wound in his head. 'Ray,' said the woman, 'I have determined; your plans now are mine; this day's work has settled all between us. But tarry not here; he will soon discover my intentions, and then woe to us both if we are overtaken!' The rest of my story is soon told," said Anne. "Ray had just bought a show that went from fair to fair. I was made to dance, to sing, to do anything. At last the idea struck Ray, that as a contrast to the monster he had engaged, I should be exhibited as the youthful Venus."

"Then it *was* you we saw at the monster show?" broke in Flora; "and that was the wretch of a woman

who stole you away? I knew it was—I knew it was!”

“And Ray,” said Edward, “the Clipper, as you call him, was no doubt the monster I suspected him to be.”

“And, oh, gracious!” said the Bridge-shooter, “then it might have been you I heard screaming, as the van passed the house, in its way across the Bridge.”

And the merchant, striking the table with his clenched hand, exclaimed, “If I but live, there is not a wretch amongst them that shall not be hunted down, and brought to justice: no, not one of them shall escape my vengeance.”

“Oh, yes,” said Anne, clinging to her father’s arm; “yes, yes, there’s one—one who has ever been kind to the poor child, when she thought she had no other friend on earth.”

“Kind to you?” said the merchant—“to you, Anne—to you, my poor child! Then God’s blessing light upon him!—he shall never want again; he shall be rich—he shall be happy, if wealth can make him so. Tell me who it was.”

“I never heard his real name,” replied Anne; “but I called him grandfather: he was Nan’s father.”

“And he was so kind to me,” continued Anne; “often and often used he to starve himself, that I might not be hungered. They used to treat him much worse than they did me, for he was old and worn out; and even his daughter, at times, would strike him, and ask him why he did not die—oh, they were very cruel to him! And but for him, perhaps I never would have again beheld my dearly loved home.”

She then told them of all that had passed after her mother had so alarmed the people in the show; all about the changing of the dresses, which at that time she had not been able at all to comprehend. Then she described to them how she had listened to Nan and the Clipper as she peeped from beneath her tent, and

had, from their lips, discovered all the truth. "And, oh," she said, "I thought my heart would have betrayed me to them, it beat so loudly, as I heard them own that I was not Nau's child, but yours. I had often before thought of running away, and coming here to throw myself on my knees, and pray to be your servant, so that I might be near you all; but then, I knew that if that wicked woman were indeed my mother, you could have no power to keep me from her, and I should be used far worse when she got me back again; but now I had learnt the truth, my heart bounded within my breast. I could not rest an instant. I silently tore away part of the covering of my tent, and creeping out, crawled along on my hands and knees, as close as I could to the ground, fearing, in the moonlight, I might be seen. When I believed myself out of their sight, I arose to my feet, and flew across the heath towards the Tybourne Tree; but before I reached it I was once more obliged to hide, for the jingling of our horses' bells told me the rest of our troop were coming. When they had passed, so sore had my feet become, that I was compelled to crawl along; and when I thought of the distance I must travel ere I should reach this spot, all hope died within me. Looking back, my alarm was redoubled, for I could see lights moving about in every direction: my escape had evidently been discovered. In hopeless despair I threw myself upon the ground at the foot of Tybourne Tree, and prayed to die before they should approach and find me. Nearer and nearer some of them came; then all the lights seemed to recede again towards the spot whence they had started—all but one, and that one came on, and on, slowly, but steadily towards the very spot on which I lay. I thought at that moment I should have gone mad with fright, when suddenly I heard my name called in a feeble voice—'Anne, Anne, if you hear me, answer; I would save you.' So suddenly had hope again revived, that, rising on my knees, I called as loudly as

I could, 'Grandfather, grandfather, I am here—here!' for it was my only friend, it was the poor old man who had always been so kind to me. 'Heaven be thanked,' he exclaimed, 'that it is I who have found you! Had Nan discovered you, I believe she would have beaten you to death. The moment your flight was detected, I guessed at once that you had overheard the very conversation which I myself had been secretly listening to: feeling that now you knew the truth, there was but one direction you were likely to pursue, I started, as swiftly as my worn-out limbs would bear me, straight into the road to London. But you must not lose a moment; yonder lies your way; here is a little money:' and the poor old man put a few pence into my hand. 'Up, child, up and away,' he said, assisting me to rise. I told him how impossible it was for me to proceed further. 'Then you are lost,' he said, 'for Nan will not give up the hunt so easily; I know her too well for that. Yet there is a hope still—this tree.' It was Tybourne Tree, a hopeless tree to most, but to me it was my all. With the assistance of the kind old man, and exerting all the strength I had, I at last succeeded in reaching the thickly-shading branches. 'On your life,' said the old man, 'stir not until daylight shall show you that we have left the place. God bless you, child! and sometimes think of your poor old friend; and Heaven be thy guard this night!'—saying which, he turned away, and I was left alone. I had not been there any great length of time, when two horsemen came from the Edgeware Road, and stopping beneath the tree, revealed to me by their voices that they were the Clipper and another of the troop. Presently they moved on slowly towards our camp, and I felt for a moment relieved and safe; but I was doomed to be again alarmed, for ere long I heard the horses' bells, the heavy rumble of the wheels, and soon was made sensible that our whole company was journeying towards the place of my concealment. The line of vans, and carts, and trampers

passed round close beneath the tree; I could hear their voices, and, between the leaves, could just discern the various parties as they passed. When I thought they had all gone, there was one still loitering behind, it was the old man; I saw him turn his face up towards where I lay concealed—I heard him whisper another blessing—and then again move slowly on.

“I cannot describe to you all the feelings that passed through my mind that night. And when at last daylight began to appear I crept lower down, and finding that no human being was near, I ventured to descend to the earth. I tore off part of my dress, and tied the pieces round my feet; and remembering that as we came along the road I had seen a lonely public, I managed, in time, to reach it; the pence the old man had given me, procured for me food, and permission to lie upon some straw in the loft of the stable. Here I slept nearly the whole day—when night again came on I once more began my journey; it seemed endless; every step I took appeared to steal away my nerves; and oh, can I ever forget the painful joy that burst upon my heart, as I first beheld our dear Old London Bridge. So worn out had I become, from anxiety and fear lest I might never reach my home again, that when I stood before the door, I could not raise my hand to knock, nor my voice to cry for help. I felt sick and dizzy, all strength deserted my limbs, and I fell at the threshold of my longed-for home. The rest you know. Oh, mother, father! I am so happy, that I feel I could die with joy.”

As she said this, she again threw her arms round the neck of her parents, and hugged and kissed every one present, the Bridge-shooter not excepted.

The merchant began to consider the best course to pursue, in order, if possible, to bring justice home to those who had been guilty of stealing the child. From what Anne had said, both the merchant and Osborne no longer doubted but that the Clipper was

the man whom Edward had at first suspected him to be—namely, one of the three wretches of the marsh; and it was settled that not a moment should be lost in obtaining the necessary powers to bring Nau and her paramour to punishment.

The whole party were here made to start up, for through the open casement flew something that fell clattering upon the table.

“Gracious! what’s that?” exclaimed Flora; then picking up the cause of her alarm, she said, “why, bless me, it’s a stone, and round it is tied a paper, and see, there’s writing upon it.”

The merchant took it from Flora, and untying the string, found the paper was directed to Edward; the writing was in a female hand, and thus it ran:—“The moment you have received this, hurry with all speed to the Southwark end of the Bridge; as you quit the gateway, say, as if to yourself, ‘who can have sent it?’ the answer you will receive, will at once convince you that nothing but good is intended: take no notice of the speaker, be whom it may, but follow: I dare not say more; many lives depend upon your speed.”

The attempt on the marshes, at once returned to all present, for that had been brought about by an anonymous communication; so to be on the safe side, it was at once determined not to notice this mysterious summons in any way.

The merchant telling the Bridge-shooter to go to the barber surgeon, that he might attend to Edward’s wound, descended to his shop. In due course the barber arrived, dressed the cut, which he declared, owing to his infallible balsam, would be perfectly healed by the next day.

As all parties had gone about their various concerns, it was unnoticed for a long time that the Bridge-shooter had not returned. Poor Flora was the first to remark the circumstance, and by degrees become quite alarmed, when presently she exclaimed, “Oh,

here he comes, and running like a King's hound—what can it mean?"

"Where's our master?" enquired William, as he entered the house, quite out of breath.

"In yonder room," said Flora; "but what is the matter?"

The Bridge-shooter, as he hurried to the room behind the shop, replied, "Something that may turn to a serious matter for us all."

When the Bridge-shooter entered the back room he was glad to find Edward with the merchant, so closing the door, that the men in the shop might not hear what he said, "Master!" he exclaimed, "you have not a moment to lose, you must fly."

"What mean you?" ejaculated both the merchant and Edward, at the same moment.

"I mean what I say. In two hours from this time it may be too late. In a few words I can tell you all. You must know that when I had been to Pole-squeeze, the surgeon, my curiosity was such that I could not resist going to the Southwark gate, just to see if any suspicious-looking persons were lurking about; the only soul I saw was a poor nun begging, as there is at the corner of every street and lane now. But though there was nobody else, I thought I'd try what charity there was in the words Edward was told to repeat there, so I said, 'Who can have sent it?' The words were scarcely out of my mouth, before the old nun walking past me said softly, 'The Cripple!' She said no more, but at once moved off. I stood for a moment doubtful what to do; but thinking that if the summons really came from the Cripple, there was surely no harm intended, but perhaps much good, I boldly started off after her. I kept at a good distance, but I saw that every corner she peeped slyly round to see that I was in her track. And now where, of all places in the world, think you she led me to?" William did not wait for an answer to his query, but said—"the very spot where Anne was taken, the black arch of the Clink!"

"Good Heavens!" said the merchant, "are those wretches there again?"

"You shall hear," replied William, and then went on. "Before we arrived there, I began to look suspiciously about, for I liked not the quarters we were in, and when she pushed open the door immediately under the black arch, and entered, I made a dead stop, and was about to let my heels save my throat, for I feared some treachery. 'Do you not know me?' said the nun; 'have you forgotten the Abbess of St. Clair?' She threw back her hood, and then I saw it was she.

"'Eoline and her husband are here,' she said; 'ascend; you'll find them above; you will be as well-come as Edward would have been.' I groped my way up the ruined staircase, and there, sure enough, in the room above the archway, I found the Cripple of the Bridge seated on the floor, supporting his blind wife in his arms—she was ill, and appeared almost dying—not a bit of furniture was in the wretched place; no bed, no couch, not even a stool. 'Why did not Edward come?' said the Cripple, 'I would have done as much for him.' I told him of your hurt, and also of our doubting whether to notice the summons or not, for no name being written, we all feared it was the scheming of an enemy, not the wishes of a friend. I enquired why he was there. 'Better to be here and starve, than burning in the flames of Smithfield. I forgot, dear child,' he said, addressing Eoline, who clung closer to him as he spoke of the fire, 'I forgot thee, dear one; but fear not, we are both safe here, if Edward, or William, have courage to befriend a *heretic*.' He then told me, what in a degree we already know, that ever since his marriage with Eoline Horton has been employing every artful scheme to bring about his destruction, and now, as a last effort, he has accused him of heresy, and of what in these days is worse, the denial of the king's supremacy. 'But for the poor Abbess of St. Clair,' said the Cripple, 'I had ere this have died upon the rack, for

if once there, Horton will never let me leave it but through the gate of death. Were I dead, Eoline would be completely in his power, and that is all he aims at."

"The fiend!" exclaimed the merchant; "were it but for the sake of Eoline, I will save them both—to her I owe the life of my own dear Alyce—but for Eoline, the burning ruins of the Convent had been her grave."

"Alas, master!" rejoined the Bridge-shooter, "I fear me much, that all your power will be required to save yourself; the man now serving Horton, was once a dependant of the Abbess; he owed her a deep debt of gratitude, and knowing somewhat of the great interest she takes in all that concerns the blind beauty of the Minories, he secretly divulged to her the designs of Horton, not only regarding the intended destruction of the Cripple, but also of a warrant of suspicion issued against you and yours. In two hours Horton himself, with his minions, will be here to search the house for unlawful and heretical books."

"Horton!" exclaimed the merchant, "he dare not approach this roof; but I will beard the villain, and—"

"Not for worlds!" interrupted the Bridge-shooter: "no, no; in these times a word may undo a man, and bring him to the flames. The Cripple, who seems to know more than he chooses to divulge, has advised, and his advice, I am sure is best—particularly as it is your plan to keep the restoration of your daughter for a time a secret—that you should secretly leave this place, taking with you your wife and child. All is prepared; even the tide favours your flight; beneath the Bridge I have stationed a covered barge, but light as a feather, with six right honest Southwark lads, that I have known for many a day, and could trust my life with—they will make the barge fly like an arrow through the flood. That even the neighbours may not be aware of your departure, I have thought of a plan by which you may leave your house unseen

by any. The next house, the Cardinal's Hat, will be closed till noon: I have sent the old woman who has the care of it, on a fortune-telling scheme to my old mother; and while she is gone I promised to act the warder. I can open the trap-door on the roof—by that you can enter, and then descending to the lower room, by the flight of steps that is there, reach the sterling, and embark safely and secretly."

The merchant paused for a moment ere he answered this strange, this unexpected proposition; when suddenly starting up he exclaimed—"It shall be so, for such a scheme will tally well with the plans I have now determined on. Edward and you will guard all here—and for the sake of Eoline, to whom I owe so much, I charge you neglect not to look to her immediate welfare; consult with the Cripple, and without telling him whence comes the aid, spare not my resources to save them."

As not a moment was to be lost, the reader may imagine the bustle and excitement which now took place. When all was prepared, Hewet placed a heavy purse of gold in Edward's hand, bidding him employ it as he might best judge, according to circumstances, as they arose.

They ascended to the roof of their own dwelling, and easily passing through that of the Cardinal's Hat, soon found themselves in the lower room. The Bridge-shooter lifted the trap-door, the very same through which Horton had entered the place, in the beginning of our tale, and carefully, with the aid of the merchant, succeeded in placing the three females safely beneath the canopy of the barge; the merchant, as he placed his foot upon the boat, whispered something in the ear of Edward, and then entered the bark.

The six Southwark lads, the moment the boat had drifted from beneath the Bridge, lowered their oars with one dash into the flood, and then like giants straining every nerve, made the frail bark quiver as each stroke bore them in triumph away.

The moment the boat was gone, Edward and the Bridge-shooter returned to their own abode, and immediately began to make arrangements for the comfort of the Cripple and the blind Eoline.

"The first thing," said the Bridge-shooter, "that the poor souls want, is a bed of some sort, for the hard boards make but a sorry couch for a dying girl to lie on, and Eoline, I fear me, is dying."

"True," replied Edward, "and the one that can be best spared, is that on which I last night slept, in Horton's old room. Make it up in the shape of a bale of cloth, and then no one will wonder at your load."

Not many minutes had elapsed after this arrangement, before the Bridge-shooter might have been seen, carrying a huge bale from his master's shop, and wending his way towards Southwark.

He had not been gone an hour before great excitement was caused, in all that part of the Bridge where Hewet resided, at seeing officers of the ecclesiastical courts of enquiry take possession of the Golden Fleece; and Horton, the well-known and unscrupulous tool of Cromwell, come to ferret out heresy, if such a wicked thing could there be found.

When Horton entered, he acted as though he had never seen Edward in all his life before. "Where is your master?" he inquired, in a tone of insolent authority.

Edward was for a moment almost thrown off his guard, for he had not yet arranged any excuse that was likely to be received as a good and sufficient reason for the absence of his master—"Gone," he said, "gone—I know my place too well, to be inquisitive about the movements of the good merchant; he may have gone, and very likely has, to Flanders, for he has a high commission from the King to fulfil, connected with his Grace's intended marriage with the Princess Anne of Cleves."

"Indeed!" replied Horton; and then addressing the officers who accompanied him—"Let not this

young man stir from the spot he is in, while I with the searchers commence our duties."

The cause of Horton procuring the warrants of search may easily be guessed at, when we find that the first room he entered was not with the officials, but alone; it was his own old dormitory. The moment he cast his eyes around it—"The furies seize them, I am foiled!" he exclaimed, for he saw at once that all he cared to find was gone; it was the bed, in which was secreted the costly diamond, and those deeds that alone could bring Eoline her rights. Hoping that it might still be found in some other room, he flew over the whole house, the ways of which he knew so well, but failing to discover the lost treasure, he descended to the room in which Edward sat, still guarded; and changing his whole behaviour in the hopes of discovering in what way the old mattress had been disposed of, he ordered his men to leave the place; then turning to his former brother apprentice, he said smilingly, "Edward, I suppose you scarcely knew me when I first came in, for times have wonderfully changed with me since last I entered this abode; and the most painful part of that great change lies in the necessity arising out of my official duties, which compel me to appear harsh and ungrateful to my oldest and dearest friends. I need not tell you how happy I feel, at finding nothing of a dangerous nature here; I have but slightly searched, for I knew it would be so; but yet I was obliged to appear to those about me, that even to such old friends as our good master and yourself, I would show no undue favour."

Edward felt so disgusted with what he knew to be hypocrisy, that he disdained to make reply.

Horton, who felt this coldness, but not having yet gained his end, would not show he did so, continued—"Why, Edward, you are lame; no serious accident, I trust?"

"A mere slight cut," replied Edward; "I slept

last night in your old room; a thief attempted to enter by the window."

"*Last night?*" exclaimed Horton, with unfeigned surprise.

"Yes," replied Edward; "but he will not trouble us again, for I suspect I shot him through the brain, and as I ran towards the little casement, I cut my foot against something sharp, which, upon examination, turned out to be a piece of knife that was sticking in the floor, and that seemed stained with blood."

Horton turned away, as he felt his own blood flying from his face, for at that instant every dreadful act that had occurred in that room, flew on the wings of conscience, like a dagger into his heart.

"I was fortunately well provided with arms, for you see we have made that room our armoury."

"Yes," said Horton, recovering himself, "you have greatly changed the place, even the old bed is gone; it was a great favourite of mine; I passed many a happy night upon it; where is it now?"

This was a very awkward question for Edward to answer; but before he could make a reply, the Bridge-shooter entered.

"Have you left the bale as directed?" enquired Osborne, with a look of meaning, as he glanced towards Horton.

"Yes, Master Edward," replied William, "and it arrived just in time."

Horton continued, not deigning to notice the Bridge-shooter—"Yes I would not mind a trifle to obtain that old memento of my happiest days:" here he put on a very sentimental look.

Edward, again giving William a peculiar glance, said, "Master Horton is enquiring after the bed that used to be in his little room below."

"Oh!" said the Bridge-shooter, "that has been burnt I don't know how long—indeed I can't tell when. You see, that superstitious people don't fancy

using a bed again on which a murdered body has been placed, so after Sir Filbut——”

“Pshaw!” ejaculated Horton rising, but his lips were white and quivering, notwithstanding his efforts to appear unconcerned—“Pshaw! if the thing be burnt, why, there’s an end of it; and I hardly know why I lost my breath in enquiring about it at all. Osborne, when you communicate with our good master, for I still love to call him such, tell him as gently as you may of this my visit; duty alone compelled it, but if I can, for his good sake, prevent a further examination into the reports that now are current against him, he may depend upon all my power to shield him.” Saying this, Horton with his crew departed from the Bridge.

We must now, for an instant, take a glance at the black arch of the Clink, for here a strange incident occurred, a few nights after the day of which we have been writing. The reader has already been informed that close to the black arch there stood three old dilapidated dwellings; in that over the archway, the Cripple of the Bridge-gate-tower, but now the guardian of that tower and its ghastly heads no longer, had taken refuge; the other two, when he first took up his abode in that locality, so dangerous to the honest, so safe for the rogue, were empty. The night after he had arrived, as he sat watching Eoline, as she lay in a feverish slumber, he thought he heard the sound of voices in the street, or lane below; he peeped from the window, whence he perceived a man and woman with a lantern ascending the large flight of steps before mentioned; they entered the house, and all was still and dark. Two nights after this, the moon had risen with unusual splendour, and in consequence of the aid, stealthily but kindly sent from Edward by the Bridge-shooter, Eoline had so rallied that she with her darling husband was at the casement. He was endeavouring to explain to her the idea of moonlight. The poor Cripple was

just about to give up the hopeless task, when suddenly he checked his speech, for Eoline, clinging fearfully to his arm, whispered, "Hush, hush!—there are footsteps near."

The Cripple listened, but no sound could he distinguish.

"Yes, yes," she said, "there are, six—seven—eight feet moving; four of them fall heavier upon the earth than do the others."

And presently they saw issuing from the arch beneath them four men; the one who seemed the leader of the party appeared to have his head covered with thick bandages of some sort; he was tall and heavily built; the other three bore between them something that resembled the body of a man. Not a word was spoken, but the tall man, who ever and anon placed one hand to his head as if suffering from pain, pointed his commands with the other.

The three men raised their load upright, and it was then evident to the Cripple that what they had brought was a dead body. At the foot of the long flight of steps stood a tall wooden post; to this they tied the corse, in an upright position; the head fell deathlike upon the shoulder; and now the Cripple could discern that from around the dead man's neck hung down the two ends of a rope, as telling the fearful tale of murder by strangulation. While the three men were thus employed, the fourth, he with the bandaged head, was fumbling with an old key in the rusty lock of the door of the house, opposite to that of the steps. When the horrid work performing by the trio was ended, the tall man approaching the dead body, gazed for a moment in its face—then laughed aloud, and spitting at it, he with the other wretches entered the third dwelling, and all again was still.

CHAPTER XIX.

FLIGHT OF THE CRIPPLE.

For though we sleep, or wake, or roam, or ride,
Aye fleeteth the time—it will no man abide.

CHAUCER.

THE horrid scene which the Cripple had just witnessed made him feel that the danger of his own position was greatly increased. He knew, that if the body were found there by the authorities, a searching investigation might *perhaps* take place, and his own concealment be betrayed. As he was thus musing, he heard a footstep approaching beneath the black arch. At the same time he saw plainly that the four men were watching from the windows of the house they had entered. The person who issued from the archway was the same woman whom he had seen with the lantern ascending the steps in company with a man. As he approached the body, she suddenly started; then looking closer—"Heavens and earth!" she said, "'tis the body of a man!" Then raising her lantern towards the face, she uttered a shriek, and exclaimed with anguish, "'Tis he! 'tis he! they have murdered him!" She started on hearing a shout of laughter behind her; and turning, saw the four men: he with the bandaged head exclaimed—"We *have* murdered him, your beautiful Ray, the Clipper! Ha! ha! Spikely never yet remained unrevenged. Bind her to the same stake," he said, turning to the men; but before they could reach her she had flown up the steps, entered the house, and secured the door within. Spikely's rage at her escape was ungovernable. He flew at the door like a bull; but it resisted all his efforts. He then changed his tone, and, told her he meant *her* no harm; and that all should be forgiven and forgotten. He listened, but received no

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reply. The Cripple meanwhile saw the woman come from the attic window, and creeping along the gutters, pass over several ruinous houses; and turning round a corner, was hid from view.

When Spikely had lost all patience he vowed, that rather than not reward her as she deserved, he'd fire the whole place, and burn her like a rat. As he was saying this, a lad hurrying from beneath the arch, said something in a low quick tone; and, without a moment's delay, the body was unfastened from the post, and conveyed to the house whence they had come.

Scarcely a minute elapsed after they had disappeared before the watch, making their round, came in sight.

The watch passed on; and in a short time the men again issued silently from the door; and as silently disappeared beneath the black arch.

The next morning the Bridge-shooter brought the poor Cripple the cheering news that Edward Osborne had prepared every thing for their flight to the Netherlands. It was settled that an hour before the moon rose, Eoline should be carried by the Bridge-shooter and the Cripple on the mattress as she lay, and conveyed some distance on the road to Greenwich, where a boat would be in readiness to bear them all to the vessel.

As the hour approached for carrying the scheme into execution, Edward and the Bridge-shooter were surprised by the Lord Mayor appearing, mounted, in full harness; followed by some hundreds of armed men. This warlike movement, which was one of not infrequent occurrence, was rendered necessary in consequence of a report brought in by the watch. It appeared that the "Bishop of Winchester's birds," for that was the name by which the ruffians who took sanctuary in the Clink or the Mint, were known, had fixed upon that night to make a foray into the city, for the purpose of robbery.

The one half of the Bridge being choked up with soldiers, and the gates closed, Edward and the Bridge-

shooter were compelled to reach Southwark by a different route ; so, hurrying through the city to Paul's Wharf, they there took boat, and proceeded towards the opposite shore.

They soon effected a safe landing, and by the aid of the Bridge-shooter's local knowledge, were in a few minutes at the door beneath the black arch.

All had long been in readiness, and there being every reason for immediate flight, they at once left the place, and in a very short time, the Cripple, with his Eoline and the Abbess, were on board the good merchant's vessel.

While these incidents were taking place, Master Hewet, with Alyce and his newly-found daughter, and Flora Gray, had arrived safely at Putney. Here, by the assistance of old Cromwell, he was at once enabled to settle in a most beautiful retreat, and taking the name of Allen, the better to throw his enemies off the scent, he began to lay out his plans for the future happiness of those dependent upon him. Innocent as he knew himself to have ever been regarding his religious views, still, even the accusation of heresy, in such times, was a thing not to be regarded with indifference ; it was, therefore, with infinite satisfaction he heard Edward Osborne's account of the interview he had had with Horton.

And here our tale must pass over a period of eight years, during which, the merchant enjoyed an uninterrupted course of prosperity and happiness. These eight years had been eventful ones to the history of the country. Protestants and Papists had intrigued for the destruction of each other ; and under the tyranny of Henry, both had suffered so much, that a Frenchman is said to have exclaimed, " Good God ! how do people make a shift to live here, where Papists are hanged and Anti-papists burnt !"

Cromwell had been created Earl of Essex, and after enjoying his dignity for a short time, had been executed at Tower Hill in 1540. Horton and his

coadjutor, Spikely, on the death of their powerful patron, had been obliged for safety to betake themselves to a foreign land.

Henry had married his sixth wife, and had become so enormously fat, that numerous attendants were required to move him from room to room; and death having at last come to him as it had to so many of his victims, our next chapter opens with the rejoicings on the coronation of his successor.

CHAPTER XX.

BRASSINJAW IN A NEW CHARACTER.

And on the morrow when the day 'gan spring,
Of horse and harness, noise and clattering
There was in the hostelries all about,
And to the palace rode there many a rout
Of lordes, upon steedes and palfreys.

CHAUCER.

YES, Edward the Sixth, although a boy scarcely past his ninth year of age, was now King of England.

The coronation being fixed for the twentieth of February, it was arranged that on the nineteenth the King should pass in grand procession from the Tower, through the city of London, and sleep that night in his city of Westminster, preparatory to his coronation in Westminster Abbey on the following day.

Exactly at one of the clock, the booming of cannon told the anxious expectants that the King had left the Tower, and the populace set up a shout of delight that rent the air: incense was waving in every direction, and scenting the breeze with holy perfume.

In order that his loving subjects might the better view his person, the King rode a step or two in advance of a sumptuous square canopy. His Highness was richly apparelled in a gown of cloth of silver, all over embroidered with damask gold; he wore a girdle of white velvet, wrought with Venice silver and precious stones, such as rubies and diamonds, with

true-love knots of pearls, and a doublet of white velvet, embroidered with Venice silver, and garnished in like manner with precious stones and pearls; his cap and buskins were also of white velvet, and in like manner adorned. His horse was caparisoned with crimson satin, richly ornamented with pearls and damask gold. His Highness's footmen, in rich coats, were on either side of the canopy, which was borne by six knights. Behind the King came Sir Anthony Brown, Master of the Horse, leading a goodly courser of honour, very richly trapped.

At the Conduit on Cornhill was a pageant, hung and garnished with arms, whereon was put a proper conduit, which continually ran with sweet wine. On the same pageant were divers instruments and goodly singing; and two children pronounced to the King's Highness two poetical speeches; and then was sung the following stanzas, the God Save the King of those days:—

King Edward, King Edward,
 God save King Edward,
 God save King Edward,
 King Edward the Sixth—
 To have the sword,
 His subjects to defend,
 His enemies to put down
 According to right in every town.
 And long to continue
 In grace and virtue,
 Unto God's pleasure,
 His Commons to rejoice!
 Whom we ought to honour, to love, and dread,
 As our most noble King,
 And sovereign Lord,
 Next unto God, of England and Ireland the supreme head;
 Whom God hath chosen
 By his mercy so good.
 Good Lord in Heaven, to thee we sing,
 Grant our noble King to reign and spring,
 From age to age
 Like Solomon the sage,
 Whom God preserve in peace and warre,
 And safely keep from all danger.

This song gave infinite delight to the public, who shouted the last two lines in full chorus.

A little further on was to be seen "a double scaffold hung with cloth of gold and silk, besides rich arras, and an allegorical representation of the young monarch himself, personified by a child appparelled in rich cloth of gold, and a robe of crimson satin, and seated upon a throne, which was upheld by four other children, representing REGALITY, having a sceptre in his hand; JUSTICE, with a sword; TRUTH, with a book; and MERCY, with a "little curtain," or pointless sword.

REGALITY, addressing the King, said, "Rule and govern prudently"—and JUSTICE observed, "And do justice condignly"—which was followed by MERCY, saying, "But mix with mercy"—"that the truth may stand surely," said TRUTH, "and your throne may endure permanently."

But at the Cross in Cheap, or a little beyond, we must halt for a moment, for it was here the king received, perhaps, what appeared to him the pleasantest token of his people's affection, namely, a purse with a thousand marks of gold in it, presented by the mayor, attended by the recorder, the chamberlain, and the aldermen.

The King getting heartily tired of so many sights, did not stop to look at the pageant of St. George and the Dragon.

And the procession entered St. Paul's Churchyard, and passed on to the Great Conduit in Fleet Street, where a pageant was also set up, and children appeared in the favourite characters of Truth, Faith, and Justice.

The last show was at Temple Bar. The gates had been painted in fanciful colours, and the battlements hung, as usual, with rich cloths of arras. Fourteen standards of flags were there, and eight trumpeters—all Frenchmen, who blew their instruments in a fashion known only in their own country. Here the

good citizens took a loving farewell of their king, and the procession passed on to Westminster without further interruption.

An now we must return to the Cardinal's Hat, where a glorious supper was, upon this auspicious occasion, to be given by mine host, Brassinjaw, to a select circle of his worshipful customers.

The lower room of the tavern had been fancifully decorated; and all the decorations were complimentary to the new king. Father Brassinjaw was also decked out for the occasion: a silken hood, or as he called it, his "liripoop," hung behind; a broad collar of fine linen, scalloped round the edges, was about his neck, and came down one-third way over his breast; his pouch, of black velvet, had been made, according to his orders, both large and deep. At his left side he wore a double sheath of daggers; his stocks were gartered beneath his knees, but would, when pulled up, reach a good way above them.

Right heartily did he receive his "dearly beloved friends," as he called his twenty or thirty guests; and when assembled they certainly formed a most motley group. Here was the carpenter, with his hammer and adze stuck in his girdle; the dyer, with his hands tinted with a mixture of every colour under the sun; then came the weaver, arm-in-arm with the maker of tapestry; and a numerous lot of haberdashers. A few military men were there too; but the oddest party of all were about half-a-dozen nondescript looking personages, who had formerly been Grey Friars; their dresses were formed of all kinds of material, colour and style; these had once been old cronies of Brassinjaw's in happier times, and now were welcomed here, as he asserted, out of "sheer charity;" but the truth was, they were comical fellows, and brought to that house many a spendthrift customer, to hear their droll tales, and roystering ditties.

The banquet which he had prepared was rich in the extreme, for it contained many delicacies which were

seldom seen but upon the tables of the great. Some few of the articles might not be thought very delicate in our days, but were actually esteemed as such by our forefathers.

The signal being given, the guests hurried to their seats, and just as Brassinjaw had exclaimed, "*De gustibus non est disputandum* ; so take what you will, my masters, there is here withal something to suit all tastes"—yes, just as he had finished this strange sort of grace, a heavy clattering was heard upon the stairs, leading down to the lower room in which they were ; the guests starting at the noise, looked round, and there beheld a knight in full armour ; followed, not by his esquire, but by a sort of monster, covered all over with scales. The new comers were the valiant St. George and the Dragon ; and the knight taking off his helmet, and the Dragon his head, displayed the well-known features of Diddle 'em Downy and Ugly Tom.

Poor Downy had received a deadly blow to all his hopes, by the King passing on without vouchsafing a hearing to the splendid speech he had been for weeks concocting, so he washed down his disappointment with copious draughts of Romney sack, and very shortly came out as brilliant and lively as ever.

Boisterous and jolly was the party ; and there were great discussions about the various pageants of the day, but this being rather a sore subject with Diddle 'em, Brassinjaw, to save his friend from the painful dilemma into which such conversation would lead him, proposed a song.

The moment the song was intimated, every eye turned upon Diddle'em Downy ; but Brassinjaw, to relieve the disappointed droll, roared out "No, no, my gallants ; no Diddle em' yet ; for who can sing *after* Diddle 'em ? but even I, Master Brassinjaw, the jolly vintner of the Bridge, don't mind *before* ; so to set the concert going, list ye roysterers all to me."

Saying this, he cleared his throat with a pint of

sack, and, falling into the humour of the times, sang the following ditty—

I.

I'll sing you a song,
That shall not be too long ;
But one that each true English heart, should e'er sing ;
'Tis born, sure, for fame,
Would you ask me its name ?
'Tis—Down with the pope, boys, and up with the king !
Then join me in chorus, and loyally sing,
Down, down with the pope, boys, and up with the king !

II.

Now, as poor "Peter-pence*"
We have driven from hence,
Some pence to our own share may fall, let us hope ;
And won't its sweet chinking,
In *my* pouch, I'm thinking,
Sound better by far, than in that of pope ?
Then join me in chorus, and loyally sing,
Down, down with the pope, boys, and up with the king !

III.

If you'd have no more flames,
Frighting men, maids, and dames,
No stakes—but of beef—no, nor axe, racks, nor rope ;
Why, take my advice,
Nor stay to think twice,
But up with the king, boys, and down with the pope !
Then join me in chorus, and loyally sing,
Down, down with the pope, boys, and up with the king !

As the singer was the giver of the feast, it is not astonishing that this loyal ditty met with a storm of approbation. Over and over again did the company roar out the two concluding lines. Just as they were repeating, for the twentieth time, the words "Down, down——" sure enough, down fell Diddle 'em backwards. His fright made him cry out lustily, which,

* "Peter-pence." A tax, for a long course of years paid by the English to the Pope of Rome.

added to the clatter of his armour, caused such an uproar, that every one started to his feet. Their surprise was in no small degree heightened, by seeing a man's head protruding through the floor. The fact was, that Downy's seat being placed upon part of the trap-door, which led to the sterling below, by this being upraised from beneath, he was thrown over, and it was the head of the man who had lifted the trap which they now looked upon. The man, seeming to know the place well, at once mounted, and, looking around, as if in search of some one he expected to see there, enquired whether "the host was there, or gone to the devil?"

Brassinjaw stood looking intently upon the stranger, but said not a word. At last, the company pointing him out, the man, after surveying him from head to foot, exclaimed—"That mine host? no, no! 'tis not he I sought; I know him not!" then looking closer, he continued, "and yet, there is a twinkle in that eye which seems familiar to me."

"Although you know not me," replied Brassinjaw, "I know you full well, notwithstanding that years have passed away, and you now come back, accoutred in the gear of a foreign soldier. But let us not stop the hilarity of this right festive eve by prosy explanations—for one night you are a welcome comer: what may after happen, will be the child of chance. Spikely, be merry, as the guest of your once sworn friend, the saintly Father Brassinjaw."

CHAPTER XXI.

A TIMELY RESCUE.

So discreet and fair of eloquence
So benign, and so digne of reverence,
And could so the people's heart embrace,
That each her loveth that looketh on her face.

CHAUCER.

THE merchant and his whole household had visited London, to see the grand procession which we have described in the previous chapter, and were now on their return to the quiet retreat at Putney.

Anne had reached that sweetest of all epochs in a female life—the bud of womanshood, when every leaf is opened by the flattering breath of Hope, when Truth's bright wings seem fluttering o'er all around.

Anne had not outgrown the promise of her infant beauty: the same sweet lovely face, that had caused her to be called the Infant Venus of the show, was there—the same luxuriant tresses, in graceful ringlets, fell over and partially hid from view her sweetly-moulded shoulders, and descending, reached nearly to the waist.

When our party had reached Charing Cross, they halted for a moment, for such crowds of persons filled up the road down to Holbein's beautiful gate of Whitehall, which then stood across the road near where the Horse Guards now is, that the merchant turned up Hedge Lane, a pretty lane, with hedges on each side, afterwards known as Whitcomb Street, now a dirty and inconvenient, but much used thoroughfare, just beyond the National Gallery. This lane was chosen in preference to the the next turning, called, even then, the "Haymarket," as being more retired. At the top of this lane they turned to the left into what now is Coventry Street and Piccadilly, then an open country road, called the "Waye to Redinge:" this road passed straight on beyond the corner at

Hyde Park, to the Knight's Bridge. Passing this bridge, they entered Bell Lane, well known in these days as Brompton Row: and on to the common of Chelsea, which led to the top of Church Street, still so called. Near Church Street was the ferry.

They soon passed the ferry, put spurs to their horses, and, at a good round pace, they made no stop until they reached the heath, and were once more comfortably at home.

After having exhausted all the topics which the wonderful sights they had that day seen gave rise to, the conversation gradually took a more sombre tone, and was settling into that exciting, but absurd strain, of telling ghost stories, when they were all startled by Alyce suddenly exclaiming, "hush!" almost in a whisper, her eyes starting with fear; "hush! 'tis there again."

Every face evinced anxiety, for in the night-breeze could distinctly be heard a sweet and melancholy air, in flute-like tones.

After the last sad note had died away, the merchant endeavoured to persuade them that it was merely the sighing of the wind through the boughs of the trees, aided by their own heated imaginations.

"But, father, dear father," said Anne, "we have heard it before for several nights, and 'tis not likely the boughs of trees would sigh the self-same air again and again. I could sing it, were I not afraid."

"Desist, desist, foolish girl!" said the merchant, sharply; "we have talked upon these follies too long already: so to rest, all of ye!"

Flora, taking the lamps, attended Alyce and her daughter to their rooms, and Edward and William retired also to their several apartments.

When Edward had entered his room, he lighted his lamp, which hung by a long line from the ceiling, and the room being warm and close, he left the window open, and seating himself near the table, for a time was completely lost in a reverie.

Suddenly he started up, for in his ear was murmuring the very air they had that night heard with so much dread. It was but a strain, and all again was still.

To add to his alarm, the lamp suddenly fell from the ceiling and was extinguished ; and again he started at hearing a repetition of the very same strain he had so recently heard—it lasted but for a second.

Notwithstanding all his firmness and determination, large drops would start from his brow. He hurried to his couch, and flinging himself, dressed as he was, beneath the coverlid, passed an anxious and almost sleepless night.

Edward Osborne remained for several hours in a state of mysterious apprehension, and it was not until morn, that sleepless fear gave way to sleep's sweet self. As he descended to the early meal, he was debating with himself, how he should best reveal what he had heard in the dead hour of night, when, from the very room he was about to enter, he again heard the air which had so startled him in the night. He opened the door suddenly, and stood bewildered before the whole family, who had already assembled, and were now in high glee, and laughing heartily.

"Heavens !" exclaimed Anne, running to him, "what ails you ? Why, Edward, you are ill !"

Osborne observing that all the rest of the party had smiles on their faces, felt the colour rise into his cheeks, from shame at his own fears.

"We were afraid," continued Anne, "that you had heard the ghost in the night, as Flora did."

"Has Flora heard it too ?" enquired Edward, quickly.

"Oh, yes !" replied the laughing girl, "and we've found him. Yes, we have, we have found the ghost."

"Ghost indeed !" said Flora ; "no, Master Edward, but we have discovered the cause for our alarm : last night I was turning and tossing in my bed, thinking of all sorts of horrid things, when I was made

almost to jump out of my skin, by hearing the air again: it came from Mistress Anne's room. I took my lamp, and plucking up all my courage, I entered, and there I found—now what do you think I found?—why, my sweet young mistress fast asleep, singing the very tune: she has got it quite pat, and was just now humming it to us.”

Osborne again quite blushed, for he remembered that a mere partition divided his own room from that of Mistress Anne's. “But you said just now, you had found the ghost,” observed Edward, still clinging to the mysterious.

“No, *we* have not,” replied Flora, “but Bridget, the dairymaid, has. When she heard the music first, she thought it was some wandering minstrel passing along, so going to the gate, there she found a very nice young man, playing upon a flute, and she gave him a silver penny. The same minstrel passes here every night.”

“Come to breakfast,” said the merchant, “and let us make a ghost of that; the horses will be here anon, and it's but sorry travelling this time of year, unless one has a good lining to one's jerkin.”

“Then you must go, William?” said Alyce kindly.

“Ay, sweetheart, and, alack! I know not for how many days, nay, perhaps weeks; but Edward and his squire there shall come down on Saturdays as usual, and Flora——”

“Lawks, master!” said Flora, “I forgot that I, too, am to go to-day; my old aunt at Hampton is ill; I have a great mind not to go.”

“Indeed, but you must, Flora—I insist,” said Alyce. “It may perhaps be the last time you may ever see your aunt in this world; go, by all means; Anne and I shall do right well, believe me.”

A short time more, and the horses were at the door.

Alyce and her daughter put on their walking gear, and with the merchant and Edward, who led their

horses, strolled for a mile along the road towards London.

After arranging that Anne was to write to Edward, should any thing of importance occur, the merchant and Edward mounted, and riding off at a brisk trot, were soon lost to sight.

They had not gone far, before they met with two ill-looking ruffians; the one was an old man, the other about thirty, but both were athletic, and had a dash of the military swagger about them. So infested had every road become with mendicants of every description, that they would have been passed by unnoticed, had not the elder one placed himself before the horses, and taking off his cap, as did the other, began to beg.—“Hast no charity, master?” said the man.

“Ay, marry,” replied the merchant, “plenty for those who deserve it; and that you may not have an excuse for doing worse—there, take that!” and as he said this he threw a piece of money upon the ground; it fell at the side of the horse; the old man stooped to pick it up, as the young one said, “Have you nothing more? This won’t do!” He seized the merchant’s rein; but almost at the same moment let it loose again, for a terrific blow from the butt-end of Hewet’s riding-whip nearly broke his wrist. The merchant and Edward waited not an instant; but, putting spurs to their horses, galloped off.

“Curses on you for a fool!” exclaimed the old man; “couldn’t you see what I was about? In another moment I had lifted him off by the heel, head foremost; when down, one blow with your staff would have settled him, and the other fellow would have flown for his life: he was worth the plucking. I know him well, although he has forgotten me.”

The young one said nothing to his mate; but, rubbing his wrist, kept on muttering the most horrible oaths. They turned down a lane, and were soon hid from view.

"Never was there such a lovely morn as this, dear mother—was there?" said Anne, "it is more like spring than winter, the sun is so glowing. Oh, how I should have delighted in such a day as this when I was a child, to have run about these fields, and played and romped with Edward! and ——" she stopped suddenly. "Did you hear that?" she said, "How alarmed we should have been, but for good Bridget's tale—listen! It is the very air: it comes from yonder copse. Let us steal softly thither; and who knows but we may see the cause of all our fears!"

Before Alyce could make reply, Anne had nearly reached the thicket: her mother followed, rather to bring her back, than sanction her curiosity—the sounds of the flute had ceased, and through a slight opening between the boughs they saw a young man sitting upon the stones of a small ruined chapel: he was plainly attired, but appeared to be particularly handsome—perhaps more as to his general bearing than mere beauty of features. His flute was now slung at his back; a gun lay by his side; but he was busily engaged sketching the remains of a beautiful cross that stood at some little distance.

Alyce led her daughter gently away without speaking, fearful that her voice might attract his notice; and she saw in what an unworthy light they should appear, were he to observe them at that moment.

"But only to think, now," said Anne, "that that very young man should have been the cause of giving us so much alarm; and now I have seen him, I am sure there is nothing alarming about him. I wish he had seen us, for I should have liked to have looked at the sketch he was making. I wonder if he would have gratified us if we had asked him?"

As they were hastening homewards they were suddenly confronted by the two men who had so recently met the merchant and Edward.

"Charity, charity!" said the old villain, as he and his companion advanced towards them; "charity, fair

ladies ; if we receive not charity from angels, where shall we look for it, eh ?”

“Yes, yes, good man,” said Alyce, at the same time drawing a purse from her pouch ;—“you are—yes ! you are, very welcome, and——”

“Do not hurry yourself, fair lady, we can wait, and if there be any difficulty, we will open the purse for you.” He put out his hand as if to take it ; Anne involuntarily threw her own hand backwards, when the other thief snatched the purse in a moment from her grasp.

“And now I’m thinking,” continued he, “how much more good that gold chain around your neck would be to such poor devils as we are, than it ever can to the like of you.”

“Oh, no, no, no ! not that, not that !” exclaimed Alyce, in perfect agony. “It was the gift of one I love more than life.”

“Oh, do not take that !” said Anne ; “here is mine ; take all I have ; there, there, and there.” She cast down every thing she could tear from off herself.

And as the thieves stooped to pick up the jewels and money that lay about, Alyce and her daughter flew from the spot as rapidly as they could.

“They must be deers indeed,” said the old ruffian, “to outrun such huntsmen as we. I’ll have that chain, or I’ll cut her throat in half with it.” He then bawled out at the top of his voice—“Stop, fools, or it will be the worse for you !”

They were easily overtaken, and seized by the iron grasp of the ruffians. “Ye shall pay soundly for this, my mistresses—no more foolery !” The air was filled with the screams of the helpless creatures—when suddenly one of the ruffians uttering a cry, fell heavily upon his face ; at the same instant, the report of a gun sounded in their ears ; the younger wretch, believing a rescue was at hand, bounded over a hedge, and disappeared in a deep ravine.

Alyce and her daughter had sunk upon their knees, locked in each other's arms, when they were relieved by hearing a voice assuring them that they were safe; and on looking round, they saw near to them the same young man whom they had so lately observed sketching near the ruined chapel. He assisted them to rise.

"Courage! courage, ladies!" said the young man; "you are safe now."

"Oh, sir!" said Alyce, endeavouring to compose her trembling nerves, "to whom do we owe this deep debt of gratitude?"

"You owe me nothing, ladies," he replied; "I owe you the happiness—your having given me the opportunity to serve you. I am a poor artist, and my name is Walter Lerue."

CHAPTER XXII.

THE ARTIST.

It may well be, he looked on her face,
In such a wise, as man that asketh grace,
But nothing wiste she of his intent.

CHAUCER.

As Alyce and her daughter returned towards the cottage of the heath, their newly-made friend made rapid progress in their good opinions.

It seemed strange that he of whom they had so lately been talking, as connected with their late superstitious fears, should suddenly become, as it were, closely linked to them by the bonds of gratitude.

Walter Lerue, although young, was evidently a man who had seen much, and understood the world more deeply than his years would seem to warrant.

When they reached their home, Walter Lerue, unlike most young men in such circumstances, excused

himself from intruding further upon them, but expressed a hope that he might be allowed to return at a later hour. Just as he was turning to leave after having received more than one assurance of the pleasure his proposed return would afford them, he dropped the whole contents of his portfolio.

Observing the admiration Alyce evinced upon viewing one of the drawings, he hurriedly picked up the remainder, and said—"Although, I fear, the poor efforts of my pencil will but ill repay you for the time you must lose in looking at them, I will leave them until I again have the honour of waiting upon you."

When Walter Lerue left his newly found friend he walked hurriedly away towards the town, and soon reached the Ferry-house, which was also the ostlery of Putney. His first anxiety was to know whether the letter-carrier from London had arrived. Being answered in the affirmative, and that a communication for him was lying on the table in the room he occupied, he flew up the stairs, and seizing the epistle, tore it open. "No money yet!" he exclaimed; "not a single noble!—no matter: they may starve, but they shall not conquer me. The host may retain what things I have here; they will be ample security for my debt, until I can pay him: let me hasten to London at once, and see myself what course to pursue; but never, no never, let me look upon the Beauty of the Heath again."

The more Walter Lerue determined upon "never looking upon the Beauty of the Heath again," the slower did he feel the time wear away, which might render it not unbecoming in him to pay his promised visit to the cottage.

He had sat for some time, turning over in his mind the most likely acquaintances he might with safety apply to for assistance in his present circumstances, when a gentle tap was heard at the door of his room. "Come in," he said, and Lillia, the daughter of the

host, made her appearance. He rose, and taking her hand gently led her into the room.

"It has just struck me," said she, "that as your father is away from home, and will be so for some hours, if you had nothing else to do, perhaps you would finish the likeness of me you have been taking such pains with. I have not sat to you for now more than a week, and I do want it to be finished," she said, "so very much; for I long to tell my poor, dear, kind old father all. This is the first secret I have kept from him in all my life, and it makes me feel at times so very miserable. Why did you wish me not to tell him about the picture?"

"In order that the pleasure might be the greater when you gave it to him. But let us to work," said Walter, anxious to change the subject; "I almost forget where I put it. I thought it was in this portfolio," and he kept turning over his drawings carelessly.

"Or perhaps," said Lillia, "it may be in this: shall I look?"

"Do child," he replied, "while I search this drawer. You know I have twenty sketches of you, somewhere."

"Heavens!" she exclaimed, as her eye fell upon one of the drawings she was turning over, "how wonderfully like! and yet it cannot be."

"Cannot be what?" enquired Lerue, heedlessly.

"Not the likeness of my kind, kind schoolfellow, Anne; or, as I ought to call her now, Mistress Allen, the Beauty of the Heath."

"And here is their cottage, too," she said; "and here is the lovely face of Anne, twenty times repeated, upon the same sheet of paper: you never told me, Walter, that you knew Dame Allen and her daughter."

"Nor did I," replied Lerue, "until to-day; but I have often seen them, and these sketches are merely the offsprings of memory."

"But come, Lillia," he continued, "we will com-

mence a new sketch of your pretty face, and not lose our time in looking for the one I have mislaid ; and while I am at work, you shall tell me all you know about Dame Allen, and Anne, your schoolfellow. Have you known her long ?”

“ Oh, yes !” replied the Lily of the Inn, “ I have known her for many years ; indeed for eight years. You must know, that although poor father never talks about it, he was once in a very different station to that of keeping an ostlery—pray do not tell him I have said so—for he only let me know it a few days since, and wished me to keep the secret to myself ; but, the moment he told me, I felt so proud, that I determined to disobey him and disclose all to you.”

“ But about Mistress Anne,” interrupted Lerue ; “ has she lived here long ?”

“ Oh, yes, almost as long as I can remember things clearly. I was just turned eight when she came up to the old convent house to be instructed.”

“ And do they live alone ?” said Lerue.

“ Mostly ! that is all the week days ; but on Saturdays, at eve, Master Allen, with two others, always comes, and remains until the Monday morning. How are you getting on, Walter ?” enquired Lillia.

After seeming to work for some little time, his mind was evidently wandering far from the object of his labour. Lillia looking round, found him completely buried in thought ; so much so, indeed, that he was quite unconscious that she had risen from where she had been sitting, and was now standing behind him, looking upon the paper, drawn on certainly, but without the slightest approach to any definite object. She placed her arm gently round his neck, which made him start as from a dream, as she said—“ Walter, dear Walter, for many days you have been so altered, that I could not, if I would, but endeavour to find out the hidden cause—and I have discovered it !”

Had a shot passed through his brain, Lerue would

scarcely have felt more stunned than he did at, as he thought, his secret being discovered; and that, too, by the last being on earth he would have liked to have known it.

"Discovered it!" at last he exclaimed.

"Yes," said the innocent girl, "I have indeed, Walter: you are poor!"

The relief he at that moment experienced gave to his features a most peculiar expression, which Lillia believing to be the effects of wounded pride at being told he was poor, said—"But, oh, Walter, since I have found that out, I love you a thousand times better than before; and but for your poverty, you would, perhaps, have never heard the confession I have this day made."

"But how, dear Lillia," he said, "how did you discover my secret, as you call it?"

"Oh," she replied, "you have told it me more than once, although you knew it not. Often, when I thought you were asleep, I have watched near your door, that none should approach to disturb your slumber, when suddenly you would speak aloud, and always about money. Even this very day, as I was coming near your door, you exclaimed, 'They may starve, but they shall not conquer me!' and something about 'No money yet!' And now, Walter, own that you are poor: I hope you are very, very poor indeed, for then my pleasure will be unbounded."

"What, Lillia, at my being poor!" exclaimed Lerue, at the same time smiling. "Is poverty such a blessing, that you would wish poor Walter to be thus blessed?"

"No Walter," replied the girl; "but that *I* might be blessed in relieving all your wants. My father has saved much, and all he has I know was saved for me. Ask him then openly, fearlessly, for his child. You will not be refused, for he would refuse nothing to make me happy. Then, Walter, dear Walter, all I should ever possess will be yours. And now you know the real cause of my boldness."

Lerue was bewildered ; to underceive her at such a moment he felt would be the acme of cruelty. The confiding girl having thrown herself upon his breast as she uttered her last words, was prevented from observing the strange workings of Walter's countenance : his features took alternately the expression of almost every feeling but that of real love ; pity, vexation, disgust at his own unthinking folly, in having led a poor innocent child into what he knew must prove hopeless misery, now filled his mind, and for a time held his tongue spell-bound.

Fortunately for Lerue, relief came to his aid when most desired ; the father's voice was heard calling upon his child. As she released herself from his embrace, she looked into his face with such an expression of confiding truthful devotion, that he had not the power to resist imprinting upon her pure but now willing lips, one kiss of real, of heartfelt kindness. Poor Lillia was for that single moment the happiest of human beings ; she pressed both his hands fervently to her lips—then casting upon him a look of intense affection, hurried from the room.

For several minutes Lerue stood exactly as she had left him, perfectly lost in thought ; at last he said—“Poor soul ! why has fate been so cruel to one deserving of all happiness ?—so unjust as to let her cast her whole heart's hopes upon him, who never can requite her ? She is but a child ; and if once I am gone, there is but little doubt she will soon forget me, and all that has passed this day. Yes, absence is the only cure for love's fever.”

The clock of the village sounding reminded Lerue that it was time for him to think of returning to the cottage on the heath.

Lerue hurried away—and to his great relief unseen by Lillia, whom he felt he should henceforth dread to meet until he had determined upon the course he should take—and soon entered the cottage, where he found the whole contents of the portfolio he had left

arranged around the apartment, and being still admired by both Alyce and her daughter. One circumstance rather annoyed him, for he discovered now, that in this collection were all the sketches he had taken of the Lily of the Inn. These caused Anne to be prodigal indeed of praise, for she pronounced the likenesses to be perfect.

"Ah," said Anne, half sighing, "she is a sweet girl, the most amiable but most childish of human beings: her thoughts are ever on her tongue. What she feels she must give utterance to. And she then related how they had been for years together at the convent school, and told the story of the father having been formerly a soldier—of his superior birth; and that now young Edward was upon the throne it was expected he would restore the old man to his rights. She told Lerue, that for many years she had known who and what he was; and how highly he was respected by all the country round; and that Walter Cromwell, who had befriended him, had also befriended all she held dear; and was just about to enter more fully into the truth of who they themselves were, when Alyce interposed, saying, "This gentleman can feel but little interest in the affairs of people so simple as the family of Master Allen." The name of *Allen* she particularly emphasised.

So agreeable did Walter Lerue render his conversation to both mother and child, and so completely had he succeeded in making himself appear as an old friend, that before he left the cottage Anne not only had displayed to him all her own drawings, which, of course, he praised far beyond their real deserts, but had more than once, at his request, taken up her lute, and sung to him some of her sweetest ditties: the one he appeared to admire the most ran thus—

What is that strain, so sad—so sweet,
Yon maiden sings, with weeping eyes?

Is it some tale of man's deceit—
 Of broken vows—of tears and sighs?
 Or is it, what few e'er reveal—
 The maddening sting, that oft will prove—
 The bitterest pang the heart can feel—
 Is it of—unrequited love?

That is the theme yon maiden sings—
 That is the cause those eyes now weep—
 That is the magic power which brings
 As 'twere a spell to banish sleep—
 That to those wakeful hours may steal
 The phantom jealousy, to prove
 The bitterest pang the heart can feel,
 Is that of unrequited love.

There was a sadness in the air, even more powerful than the melancholy attempted to be depicted by the words, which sank deeply into the heart of Lerue, for he thought, at the moment, how truthfully might such a song be sung by poor Lillia; and taking a hurried, but kind farewell, he departed.

We must now leave the fair ones of the heath, and once more return to OLD LONDON BRIDGE.

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE COMPACT.

* * * The revel anew,
 Till that the bright sun had lost his hue,
 For the horizon had 'reft the sun his light;
 This is as much to say as it was night.

CHAUCER.

NIGHT seemed to be thinking seriously of wedding itself to morning ere the revellers at the Cardinal's Hat gave indication of retiring to their various homes. This was the second night of revelry—it was the night of the coronation, and was now at the guests' own

charge, and all were more less in an advanced stage of inebriety. Four of the party—Checklocke, Catchemayde, Silkworm, and the sharp-nosed little arrow-maker—were among the last to leave; and when they found themselves in the open air upon the Bridge, and saw a light burning in the merchant's house, they gave three cheers "for honest Master Hewet."

Cachemayde and the sharp-nosed little arrow-maker, waxing valiant, declared that they would make an immediate attack upon the thieves in the Clink. "*They* would rout them out; *they* would tie them all back to back, and in the morning they would lead them by a rope in triumph to Guldhall;"—and linking their arms together, they hastened towards the Clink. It so happened that the "Bishop of Winchester's birds" were taking a flight that night in search of prey, so that the lanes were perfectly clear, when the four redoutables emerged from beneath the black arch, and finding themselves unopposed, they set up a shout of defiance.

"What!" exclaimed the smith, "have you all fled at our approach?—dare not one of you show his nose, in case we should pull it off? Oh, oh! we have caught you, have we?" he bawled out, while at the same time he pointed to a window, from which a man's head was thrust. Seeing this, they all exclaimed, as with one voice, "Surrender! surrender! surrender!"

"You be d——d!" was the only reply they received.

"Come down, and surrender!" squeaked out the sharp-nosed little arrow-maker. "Know, villain, that we are constables—constables! do you hear that! So tremble, and surrender!"

"But wouldn't you like more than one of us, my masters?" said the man, laughing.

"A hundred, if we can catch them!" roared out Catchemayde; "not one less than a hundred will satisfy me!"

"Well, we must see what we can do to please you."

Having said this, the man sent forth a whistle, so loud and shrill, that it seemed to call forth echoes for miles around. Scarcely a second elapsed before another whistle, of like power and shrillness, replied; and then another, and another, and another.

These extraordinary sounds flying about in every direction served to awaken the four invincibles from their drunkenness; and the same thought appearing to have touched all their minds at once, they flew four different ways, as hard as their legs could carry them.

Silkworm and Checklocke fortunately took the right road from the Clink; not so poor Cachemayde and the sharp-nosed little arrow-maker, who, rushing into two alleys, flew into the arms of about fifty ruffians: they were at once dragged off towards the black arch to the spot whence the first whistle had been heard.

By this time the man at the window had descended, and was dancing about quite frantically, and laughing and roaring out, "Huzza, my Bishop's Birds! we've caught a constable—caught a constable, and glorious fun we'll have!"

"And as time wears," said the leader of this lawless band, "and justice must be satisfied, I ask you, if a rascally hawk will come and poke his nose into a Bishop's nest, and want to hook out a hundred full-grown birds, what ought to be done to him?"

"Plucked and roasted alive!" said a woman. "But *you* know, brother, what's the best to do in such a case; and it's my advice," she continued, addressing those around her, "it's my advice to leave the handling of these fools to the mercy of Bludgeon Billy, our leader here."

"Leave 'em to him, leave 'em to him!" exclaimed nearly every man at once.

The leader bearing the euphonious title of Bludgeon Billy, made a bow, in acknowledgment of the honour conferred on him. "Then thus I decree," said he,—*"First, tie them back to back, and then haul*

them up to yonder beam, and roast them alive, until they are half done—cut off their ears, and, as a treat, the one shall eat the ears of the other.” So to it, my Birds--pick ’em, and pluck ’em, and hang ’em to roast!”

“Hurrah!” exclaimed the thieves, and in an instant all was bustle, swearing, laughing—cries from the victims and shouts of derision from the rabble. The rope was thrown over the beam, and poor Catchemyde and his comrade were soon swinging in the air, screaming and kicking about, to the great delight and merriment of the crowd below, many of whom were busily employed heaping up straw, and faggots, and broken wood, to make the fire beneath them.

The agony the poor creatures suffered may easily be imagined, as the smoke and fire began to ascend. Despair was rapidly seizing upon the little consciousness that fear had left them, when their ears were startled by loud shouts heard through the passage of the Black Arch. They thought that more of the thieves were returning, until they perceived a sudden panic seizing upon the ruffians below, as they all together rushed beneath the Black Arch to meet the danger, whatever that might be.

The air was filled with screams of women, curses of men, and shouts of defiance and of rage; many returned covered with blood; some with broken heads, others with broken arms, or wounded limbs; one or two were carried past, apparently dead; from the increasing number of the fugitives, it was evident the thieves, for once, were being worsted.

The thieves who remained in the Clink soon found the force brought against them perfectly resistless. The two leaders of the attacking party, fought with a determination against which there was no standing; each seemed endeavouring to outvie the other; for pride as well as courage appeared to actuate them both.

“You shan’t outdo me, Master Edward!” exclaimed

the Bridge-shooter, for he it was, with Osborne, who now was heading several scores of city apprentices, armed, as usual, with their resistless clubs; "you shan't outdo me—there!—and there!—and there!" he bawled out, as at every blow a ruffian fell to the ground.

Edward went more coolly, but not less determinedly to work; he remembered for what purpose they had been called out, merely to rescue Catchemayde and his companion, so that all he aimed at, was to cut his way through the crowd of thieves, until he should find those he came to save.

And it was only when the whole space before the Black Arch was clear of an opponent that the perilous but ridiculous situation in which their friends were dangling, was first perceived by Edward and his companions. In spite of every feeling of pity and humanity, they could not resist a hearty laugh at the expense of poor Catchemayde, and little sharp-nose.

"Never mind, never mind!" said the two, as they were being lowered down; "only let us once more set foot upon Old London Bridge, and if ever we are caught attempting to put salt upon the tails of the Bishop's Birds, may we be picked to death for our pains, say we!"

This fortunate rescue was owing, principally, to the circumstance of Edward Osborne having sat up late that night, to see the Bridge-shooter the moment he arrived from Hampton, where he was to leave Flora, and it was almost morning when Edward opened the door to admit him.

Edward had scarcely commenced informing the Bridge-shooter of the affairs that would require them astir at daybreak, when they were alarmed by a violent knocking at the door, and cries for help and rescue.

It appeared, that when Silkworm and Checklocke had effected their escape, they hurried to the Bridge, and observing the light still in the merchant's house,

it at once struck them that Edward Osborne was, of all people, the most likely to aid in the rescue of their two unfortunate companions.

The moment Edward and the Bridge-shooter heard what had happened, they lost not a moment in giving the alarm to those whom they knew would not be backward in such a cause, and this being the night of the coronation, there were plenty of the wine-houses still filled with the very boys they wanted to assist them.

A word from Edward, beloved as he was by almost every apprentice of the city, was quite sufficient to raise an army of youths who knew the use of the club, and had courage enough to employ it under a leader whom they liked and confided in. How quickly they were in the Clink, and what good service they there performed, the reader is already aware of.

"If I might pop in a little bit of advice," said the Bridge-shooter, "I should say, having gained our end, the sooner we sound an honourable retreat the better."

"Right, right!" exclaimed the sharp-nosed little arrow-maker, "and I and Catchemayde will lead you back in triumph." He did not wait for a reply, but placing himself in the very foremost rank of those nearest the line of march leading *from* the Clink, began to move on.

While these scenes of noise and desperate encounter had been enacting at the Clink, one of a different stamp had passed in the Cardinal's Hat, between Brassinjaw and the villain Spikely. The moment the house was clear of the roysterers, Brassinjaw thus addressed Spikely—"Now, Master Spikely, although years have passed since we met, and may have caused many a change around us, yet I suspect that there need be no useless beating about the bush before we come to a clear understanding with each other: when we last parted, we parted enemies—how do we meet?"

"As friends, an thou wilt!" replied Spikely, "for since the work I come upon must pay us both well,

I suppose the bargain of friendship between us is already settled?"

"It is!" replied the host, "I am your sworn ally—that is, if, as you seem to promise, you can make it worth my while—not else!"

"Of that you shall be the judge," said Spikely; "listen!" and mine host seating himself at the opposite side of the table, gave signs to Spikely that he was ready to listen to whatever communication he might wish to make.

"You hate Horton?" said Spikely, with a look that seemed to enquire, and answer its own enquiry at once.

"We'll not lose time," said Brassinjaw, "in talking. You say I hate him—I do!"

"Otherwise," continued Spikely, "I would not trust you. Know, then, that bound as he and I were once by mutual interest, that interest having vanished, the bonds are severed. He knew I held a secret that was like a rope about his neck; I had but to speak the word, and that rope would have squeezed his life out."

"And it shall!" said Brassinjaw, at the same time clenching his hand and grinning malignantly; "that is, if you but let me catch one end on't, and he be now alive!"

"He is, but he believes *me* dead! Yes, thanks to his kind intentions, he believes me dead. When, on the fall of Cromwell, we both fled, we entered as mercenaries into the service of the Emperor. By some good luck for him, for the devil always takes care of his own, he ever gained the greatest share of spoils and plunder, I the most hard knocks. But my secret ever made his purse my own, so it mattered little. At last, so goaded was he by my ever-renewing wants, that I felt I had strained the cord too tight; so I thought it better to look a little to my own safety. I therefore shifted my quarters from the band to which he belonged, intending for a time to

keep aloof from him. In the last battle, and a frightful one it was, I fell to the earth wounded, and so severe were the wounds I had received, that I could not raise myself from off the earth; my dress being but of the poorest, those who came near enough to hear my feeble calls for help, cast but a glance upon my rags, which holding but no temptation to their avarice, passed on, caring not a jot whether I lived or died. At last, I perceived Horton approaching. By a violent effort, I succeeded at last in raising my arm to attract his notice; but so intent was he upon the work of despoiling the dead, that for some time he perceived me not. Presently turning towards the spot where I was lying, I exerted the whole of my little remaining strength, and called him by his name. When he saw by whom he had been addressed, his countenance became suddenly deadly pale. No other soul was near. I knew he held me in deadly hate, and wished my death; I was resistless, and in his power. As he approached me, I saw him deliberately take from its sheath a knife; he looked around—no one was near; think what I felt at that dread moment. "'Tis hopeless to call for aid," he said, as he grinned at me like the devil; 'you laughed at me once for my childish fears at being a murderer: I am now a man, and no longer fear to shed man's blood: it is but justice that you who taught me should have some share of the harvest of your tuition—die, wretch!' he shouted in my ear. I heard no more—but I felt one pang as he stabbed his knife into my neck—and then my senses fled."

"But how," enquired Brassinjaw, "did you escape alive at last?"

"By a miracle, if such things be!" replied Spikely. "When consciousness returned, by my side was sitting what I thought to be an angel of heaven; but turning my head the other way, there sat, what seemed to be a fiend awaiting my guilty soul. But now comes the strangest part of all: for who think

you my preserver was?—the Cripple of the Bridge-gate-tower!—The angel by my side—the blind girl, Eoline!”

“It appeared,” continued the latter, “that after the battle, the Cripple had gone to the field, to render all the service he might to the wounded or the dying. I had been thrown upon a heap of dead, intended for burial: fancying he saw in me some signs of still-lingering life, he bore me in his arms to his own cottage, just without the town. Although there was but little chance of my recovery, they never gave up hope, but tended me like an infant, and thus, by their unceasing care, I was saved from death. One more of our old friends was there, and one whom I used most scurvily—the Abbess of St. Clair; but she forgave me; and one night when I thought I was dying, and being half delirious, I—but, pshaw!—my story has already been long enough; the end of all, is all I ever care for—I recovered, and here I am! And now I am sworn to hunt to death the villain Horton. I will serve all that he would wrong, be whom they may. I want revenge upon *him*, and that I’ll gain, though I be hanged by the same rope in gaining it.”

Spikely then told Brassinjaw that Horton was the real murderer of Sir Filbut Fussy; but that he himself having been so deeply implicated in the affair, and Brassinjaw, although not connected with the knight’s death, being so mixed up with the continued robbing of Sir Filbut, that they would take their revenge in a way more safe for themselves, than by a public denunciation. What their ultimate plans were time will show.

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE LILY OF THE INN.

Her bright hair combèd was untressed all.

CHAUCER.

As LERUE sauntered towards the ostlery of the ferry, his awkward position in regard to the young girl Lillia, came forcibly upon his mind. By the time he reached the inn, it was rather late in the night ; he had purposely loitered on his way, in order that the host and his child might, at least, have retired to rest.

Just as he was entering the door of his apartment, he was startled by a gentle voice pronouncing his name.

"I could not go to rest, Walter," said Lillia, "until I knew you were safe : there have been such desperate people about here lately, that no one is secure after nightfall ; but now I know you are here, I shall to sleep quickly—happily !"

And they parted ; Lillia to dreams, filled with all these fairy visions which young love so much delights in ; and Lerue, to think upon another, the Beauty of the Heath.

Edward Osborne, although he had not heard for some days from the cottage, was plodding on in his usual quiet manner, and was almost congratulating himself upon the happy peaceful tenure of his life, when a letter from his young mistress arrived ; and breaking the seal, he read—

' DEAR BROTHER,

' It is seldom I have to write to you upon subjects more exciting than perhaps an account of our increasing stock in the poultry-yard, or of Roger having slipped his foot into the milk-pail, which, you know, he did, not a week ago ; but now, dear Edward,

open thine eyes, and devour a tale of real romance. I have began this letter thus ridiculously to prove before hand, that although there was much to alarm, and indeed some positive danger, yet no real harm has happened to us.'

And then she detailed to him the whole circumstances of which the reader is already aware—of how they had peeped at the ghost whilst sketching—of the attack of the two ruffians, whom she described so accurately, that Osborne knew at once that they must have been the same who stopped him and the merchant.

'And now, who do you think,' wrote Anne, 'was our preserver? No other but the ghost! and a nicer young man I have never beheld—I would have said, *handsomer*; but my mother will have it he is like me—and she says that people who are alike very often marry each other. Is not that delightful, Edward? Only think of my being married!

'You know I am in jest, Edward, when I say this: marriage is rather too serious an undertaking to determine upon at a moment's notice; nor do I think I ever shall marry. Can you believe it to be little Anne writing all this nonsense? But I will try to be as serious as you always are. Well, then—this our preserver is called Walter Lerue: he is an artist, and a very clever one indeed: before we knew him, he had taken twenty likenesses of me, only seeing me at a distance—was not that clever?

'But ours are not the only likenesses he has succeeded in—he has made an equal number of my sweet school-fellow, Lillia; you know whom I mean, although you have never seen her. By-the-by, Edward, what a darling little wife Lillia would make for you!

We want you, Edward, to copy what I have written about our new-found friend, and forward it to my dear father, and then we wish you to make all the enquiries you can about Master Lerue—his other name is Walter—it will not give you much trouble,

for being so clever, he must be known very well in London.

"Walter Lerue," said Edward, when he had got thus far through this the letter; "there is an old artist of that name, can it be he? But I had forgotten, Anne's Walter is a nice *young* man; it may be his son though, I'll enquire about that; I think the old one bears a very bad character; indeed I know he does: if he be the son of such a man, the sooner the connexion be broken off the better."

The more he read of the letter, the more he became annoyed by the frequency of the name of Walter Lerue, meeting his eye in almost every other line.

"It is very remarkable," he observed, "that Anne has said *dear* Edward but once, throughout this interminable epistle; I hope she will not, like the generality of the world, forget her old friends in her admiration of her new."

Poor Edward was quite astonished, that, highly as he had always appreciated Anne's goodness, and even her beauty, it seemed to him that it was only at this very moment that he had for the first time discovered even one half of her excellencies.

It was odd enough, but the letter he returned to Anne caused to her almost as much uneasiness as hers had to him. In spite of all his efforts to the contrary, there was a sadness in the turn of thought he could not help giving to the most trivial circumstance.

Lerue continuing to feel the irksomeness of his living at the Ferry, had removed to a farm house on the other side of the heath. He had not again visited the Allens, but rambled about the neighbourhood. One day at noon he found himself near the ruined chapel, and as he approached the ruin, he was astonished at hearing, sung by a low and sweet voice, the very air which he was accustomed to play, and with which he had alarmed the merchant's family. He stole gently towards the opening in the ruin, when he there beheld the lovely Anne, singing, and sketching the ruined cross.

This was an opportunity that, to his romantic imagination, seemed brought about by fate, and one he could not muster forbearance to neglect.—“I will,” he said, “this day know my fate! what is all the world to him who loses his heart’s life—the only being in all the world who could render that world a paradise to him?”

With feelings such as these words indicate, he approached the fair one; who, on hearing her name pronounced, started in affright.

“Be not alarmed!” he exclaimed, scarcely knowing what he said, “’tis I—Walter Lerue!”

So different to his own was her manner, and so at variance with that which he had expected and hoped his unlooked-for presence would have caused, that he stood for a time perfectly bewildered.

Lerue had been for whole days thinking of nothing else—for whole nights dreaming of nothing else but the lovely Anne. Observing the little excitement his presence had caused, he felt that to declare his passion then would be absurd; but still the opportunity appeared so glorious, the spot so romantic, for such a disclosure—their being alone, too, was a chance that might never occur again, and suddenly seizing her hand, she was startled to see Walter Lerue fall on his knees before her, but ere he could utter a word, or Anne demand the meaning of such strange conduct, they were, for a moment, both paralyzed at hearing a piercing shriek near them. Lerue started to his feet, and both rushing from the ruins, they found, behind some shrubs and fragments of the chapel, the fainting form of the poor Lily of the Inn.

Lerue stood astounded, and felt as though he would have wished the earth to open and swallow him. In a moment the whole truth had flashed upon his mind. The ruined chapel was a favourite spot with him—Lillia knew it was so—and the poor child had gone there, day after day, since his departure, in the hope of seeing him; but, although disappointed so often,

she still hoped on, and was happily building up all sorts of fairy castles in the air, as she approached the loved ruins, and was just picturing the bliss of meeting Walter—when she beheld him kneeling at another's feet: she uttered one shriek, and fell senseless.

Never had Lerue felt such a bitter pang as he did upon beholding Lillia lying as it were in death. The cottage being nearer than her home, Anne implored Lerue to bear her thither.

They were but a very short time in reaching the cottage, and Lerue having given his still unconscious burden into the care of Alyce, hastened away to the Ferry, to remove any alarm Lillia's absence might create.

He felt greatly relieved to find that her father was in London, and would not return for some time; so going to the room he had recently occupied, for the purpose of writing a letter he had before intended to have written, his heart quite ached at observing, that not one single thing there belonging to him, but had some mark about it of Lillia's devoted love. A rough sketch he had done, to please her, of himself, she had adorned with flowers, and had placed it on the chair he had mostly occupied; before it stood another seat, and upon this he found her lute.

He now determined upon the course he would pursue, and taking another seat—for he felt that it would be like sacrilege to remove those slight but touching evidences of pure affection—he commenced his painful task.

CHAPTER XXV.

A MYSTERIOUS VISITOR.

But so befel, this merchant on a day
Shaped him to maken ready his array,
Toward the town of Bruges for to fare,
To buyen there a portion of ware.

CHAUCER.

FROM the hour the merchant set sail for the Low Countries, the wind proved so contrary, that although several days had elapsed since leaving the river, the vessel had made no further way than the North Foreland, and so impossible did the captain of the merchant's vessel find the task of beating round the North Foreland unaided, that he cast anchor, and put up signals for a pilot.

Many and many were the hours they remained unheeded ; and the gathering storm so rapidly increased, that it seemed next to impossible that any boat would venture to bring them aid.

But at last, to their great joy, a boat did near them ; and a pilot and his four men were enabled to climb on board the ship.

Every precaution that could prevent their being driven from their present anchorage was resorted to. Another anchor was let go, and all was made what sailors call "snug" for the night.

"See, see !" said the pilot, "is not that a light bearing down from the nor'east ? It is a signal of distress ;" and through the darkness the merchant and his crew could see the vessel, about their own tonnage, pass them. She was soon lost to sight ; and all was dark and dreary as before.

The perils of their own situation demanded their attention, for just then both cables suddenly broke, and the pilot did all he could to give the safest direction to the flying vessel.

Anxiously did everyone hope for the moon to shine out through the break in the clouds, for they were fast coming near. At length the moon shone out sufficiently to show, by the breakers, where those sands lay; and as the tide had fallen in many places their treacherous heads were high above the surging waters.

"She's there!" said the pilot, pointing towards some shapeless black masses, already half embedded in the sands, "she's there, sure enough! that is, as much as is left of her. I thought when we saw her scudding along, she would be stopped by that sand-trap."

The merchant, who had been throughout the storm one of the most watchful, was attentively looking upon the sand-bank, and judging by the breakers whether they were approaching too near the shoals, suddenly exclaimed—"By Heavens! there is something moving on the sands—look there, there!"

All hands ran to the side of the vessel where the merchant stood, and through the hazy atmosphere distinguished what they believed to be some wretched human beings, awaiting the rising of the tide to bring them that death, from which, for a short space, these sands had rescued them.

The pilot declared it would be madness to attempt to offer them succour; but the merchant first entreated, then commanded, that, however hopeless the attempt, it should be made.

"And I will be the first!" exclaimed the merchant, "for I ask no man to meet a danger I fear to meet myself: will any follow me to the trial?"

The boat was lowered with the merchant, and three of the stoutest hands aboard, who had at once volunteered to accompany him.

While the merchant was thus surrounded by the perils of the storm upon the sea, Osborne was encountering perils scarcely less formidable upon Old London Bridge: so tremendous had been the

power of the winds, that more than one dwelling was unroofed, windows were blown in, and in one instance an entire house was carried from the Bridge into the raging flood.

And just at this moment Edward and the Bridge-shooter were alarmed by a loud knocking at the outward door.

"It's an odd night for visitors," said the Bridge-shooter, "unless, indeed, it's some poor devil whose house has given him the slip, as our neighbour, the lantern-maker's has just done!" and having opened the door, he re-entered the apartment where Edward was sitting, followed by a stranger closely muffled up in a cloak, and having on a military cap, made after the foreign fashion.

"Are you Edward Osborne?" inquired the stranger, addressing Osborne.

"I am," replied the other. "Your commands must be pressing, that you give me the honour of a visit on such a night as this!"

"When a soldier has a duty to perform," said the stranger, "it is not often the weather stops him in his course! My commands were to see you immediately on my arrival—and here I am! And as it is you, young gentleman, to whom I was sent, I will at once disclose my mission! You know a villain named Horton, Harry Horton?"

"He was my fellow apprentice!" replied Edward. "He went abroad some years ago, and is in all likelihood dead, for since he left England, we have never heard a word concerning him."

"He lives," said the stranger; "and it is to tell you that he lives, and put you on your guard, that I am here. I was told to place in your hands a charm, and one so powerful that it must not be used until the last extremity. When the hour shall come that he seems resistless, take from your breast this charm." And at the same time throwing upon the table the blood-stained knife with which Horton had murdered

Sir Filbut in the wood, he continued, "Use it as I have told you; when it be necessary that you should know more, the Witch of Houndsditch will reveal it. Do as I have commanded, and you will snare a villain, and befriend your friends—farewell!"

The stranger waited not for further parley, but hurrying down the dark stairs, was soon heard slamming the outer door.

"Are you sure it is a knife?" said the Bridge-shooter, seizing Edward's arm, to prevent him from touching it; "are you sure it is?"

"Nonsense, William!" said Osborne, smiling; "I fear not to touch it; it's but an apprentice's old-fashioned dagger-knife, such as I used formerly to carry. These marks are not of rust," and he looked closer at the blade; "they are more like old stains of blood."

"Blood!" exclaimed the Bridge-shooter, poking his nose over the knife; "and see," he continued, "the point has been broken off—and hang me if that pattern running down the blade isn't—but wait a moment, wait a moment—only you just wait a moment!" And the Bridge-shooter, seizing a lamp, hurried up the stairs, to the very top of the house; and as he returned into the room, he exclaimed, "It is, I'll swear it is, before I try it! See here, master Edward, see here!" and he held up the broken piece of the blade against which Osborne, it may be remembered, had cut his foot, and which the Bridge-shooter had kept ever since; and placing it at the end of the knife, to Edward's astonishment, it fitted so exactly, that it was not possible to doubt the two parts having formerly been one.

"Here's a mystery," observed Osborne, "and one that I think will baffle all our ingenuity to fathom."

"Well," said William, "in the morning I'll away to my old mother; for you remember the stranger told us, what further was to be learnt would be through her: I'll manage to ferret out something."

Next morning, when the Bridge-shooter reached his mother's cottage, he fancied he saw a figure standing in the room, resembling the stranger of the night before; and raising the latch without a sound, he was amazed to find no one in the room but his old bed-ridden mother.

"Where's the stranger?" he exclaimed, looking round the apartment. "I'll swear I saw him standing here! Come, mother, don't have your witchery nonsense with me. Who was it?"

"He!—who?" enquired the old dame; "those that I have seen, you could not see. He has been with me again this night."

"Whom mean you?" enquired her son.

"The murdered knight," replied the old woman; "you'll hear more of him anon—you'll hear more of him anon; and when you do, remember well that I have told you this; and if you and Edward Osborne would serve those you love, both you and he must hasten to the cottage on the Heath: you will there find one you little dream of."

The Bridge-shooter, impressed as much by the manner of his mother as by her words, returned hastily to the Bridge and delivered the message.

"Well, then, William," said Edward, "we'll away at once; if a service is to be performed, the sooner it be done the better. Besides, I have for some days past had strange forebodings concerning the cottage on the Heath; an inward sort of feeling that seemed to impel me to hasten thither, and see that all was well. Heaven send it be so!"

As soon as the affairs of the merchant's shop could be put into sure train, that their absence might cause no disparagement of the business, the two mounted their horses, and starting at a good round pace, were soon far from London. It was towards nightfall when they arrived at the Cottage; but the strange incidents that there took place we must reserve for a future chapter.

CHAPTER XXVI.

THE ITALIAN.

My truth will I hold to thee, my brother,
As I have sworn, and each of us to other,
For to be true brethren in this case,
And both we go abouten our purchase.

CHAUCER.

AFTER sitting for some time, Lerue at last took up his pen and wrote to Dame Allen an excuse for not returning to the cottage, business of importance having called him to London.

Having dispatched his letter, he ordered a horse to be brought, and hurried away to London. When he reached Southwark, he dismounted at the Tabard—the Inn immortalized by Chaucer, a portion of which still exists; and here he left the horse, and hastened on foot towards the Bridge. Feeling somewhat athirst just as he was passing the Cardinal's Hat, he entered, and called for a tankard of ale, seating himself near a window that looked on to the Bridge. There were several persons in the room, but, engrossed in his own thoughts, he did not pay any attention to them, till he was addressed by our old friend, the sharp-nosed arrow-maker, who said, "Now, sir, I appeal to you, who, being a stranger, as it were, that is, not one of us, you can have no prejudices either for or against whatever I say, or he says, or the other says—or what anybody says. Now, sir, I appeal to you—is it not a just law, a good law, a righteous law, a glorious law?"

"Before I decide," said Lerue, "I think it would be as well that you should first tell me what law you are alluding to?"

"What law!" exclaimed half a dozen at once; "what law, indeed!—why, what law can it be, but the new one to punish begging!"

"And in what way does it punish them?" enquired Lerue.

"First, then," replied the little arrow-maker, who appeared to have studied the new law deeply—"first, then, those who are found loitering about for three days, are to be branded on the breast with a hot iron, and made a slave of the informer for two years. Secondly, if the slave run away for fourteen days, and is caught, he is to be marked with a hot iron on the forehead, or the ball of the cheek: and having been thus burnt, he is to be adjudged a slave to his master for ever; and should he then attempt to escape, he is to suffer the death of a felon. Now, I again ask, is not that a just law, a good law, a righteous law, a glorious law?"

"As far as I can understand it," rejoined Lerue, "it appears to me to be a law, that must have been framed by a set of devils, rather than by a body of Christian men!" And having delivered his opinion was on the point of quitting the place, when he fancied he saw some one in a dark corner of the room, endeavouring to avoid his notice; he at once walked straight to the spot, and exclaimed—"Nino!" The man appeared to be confused at being found in such a place, rose, and in Italian, uttered a few words to Lerue, who replying in the same language, left the Cardinal's Hat followed by him whom he had addressed as Nino.

There was one other who also quitted the place, this was Spikely; he had been for a long time before conversing with Nino, whom he had known when abroad, and it was to meet Spikely, and renew their former friendship, that Nino had then visited the Cardinal's Hat. Spikely followed at some distance, and saw Nino enter a boat at the stairs at Swan Lane, and depart towards the west; Lerue passing by the Steel Yard, was soon out of sight. Spikely hurried down the stairs, and selecting the boat that appeared to him the most lightly built, he jumped

in, and was soon in the wake of the boat of Nino. When they arrived opposite the Strand, which, at that time, was adorned with the magnificent mansions and castles of the nobility, the gardens of which extended to the water side, Nino was put ashore at the private stairs of one of these mansions; and Spikely coming alongside at the same moment, the two cronies stepped ashore together. They entered the beautiful grounds, and after a few words, implying that they would meet again in a few minutes, Spikely made himself comfortable in an alcove that overlooked the river, and Nino hastened to the castellated mansion.

"So he is to arrive to-day!" said Spikely, speaking to himself; "luck befriends me; I shall have merely to forge my bolts, and I need not fear finding fools enough to shoot them for me. This Nino, this young Italian, may be turned to good account." And continuing his soliloquy, he ran over the list of those upon whom his vengeance would light.

"Yes," he continued, "I cannot forgive my brother's death. No, that must be paid for early or late; when he has done my work against Horton, then young Master Osborne's own turn may come; the same with Hewet, and the like with the Bridge-shooter, and the same with Nan too. She may be dead: well, if so, 'tis better perhaps. But this new law they talk of, might have worked for me gloriously. If her father had been still alive, and I could have caught him by it, that would have been the way; the only way to touch her to the quick, was for others to ill-use him. I have often worked her up to madness by the kicks and cuffs I gave to him."

Hearing footsteps close to the hedge which divided the alcove where he was seated from the principal walk, to discover who the speakers were, he peered through an opening, and was surprised to see that Baron Seymour, the Lord High Admiral of England, and his enemy Horton were in close conversation.

Nino coming up at this moment, placed in Seymour's hand the packet which Lerue had given him, and Horton having been dismissed, the Lord High Admiral perused the contents very rapidly, and turning to Nino, he said—"The answer is—'tis granted! An hour hence let him be at Whitehall, where he will find the necessary document!" Saying this, the Lord High Admiral moved on towards the mansion, and Spikely being joined by his friend, the two entered one of the boats, and rowed towards the Palace of Whitehall.

As they went along, Spikely observed to his companion, that Horton's sudden appearance had not surprised him half so much as his being found where he had just seen him.

"The reason, I think," replied Nino, "is simple enough; Horton having distinguished himself abroad in the Protestant cause, now that the Protestant cause is again prosperous, returns, as hundreds of the Cromwellites will do, to seek employment, or rather rewards, for what they call their sacrifices in the cause of truth: he wants employment, and he'll get it: and why should he not? Can you tell me of one government throughout the world that does, or ever did, or ever will exist, without the aid of scoundrels? No, Master Spikely, no! I'm an Italian, and our government, though wondrous holy in outward show, we all know to be most rotten at the core. But what is yours? Not a tithe the better! Look at your glorious Cranmer, who swears to be a Papist, whilst a Protestant at heart, who swears a life of celibacy, whilst all the while he has a wife, and children too! Ha, ha! 'tis marvellous to see how men can be deceived. No, no, *amico*, while the wind blows in the quarter it now does, Horton, the unscrupulous tool of Cromwell, may ask and have!"

Saying so, Nino's boat stopped suddenly, just beneath a projecting window that stood out from one of the buildings, or rather castles, that then adorned

the Thames, and he chanted in the Italian language a song, the last line of which may be freely translated—"Unless indeed I am forgot."

"Diavolo!" he exclaimed, "but it seems I really am forgot!"

"By whom?" enquired Spikely.

"Oh! a pretty little countrywoman of my own," replied the other, and he again trolled a verse of his serenade, and had just come to the concluding line, when a fair hand was seen thrust from the casement above, and from it fell—not a tender *billet-doux*, but a silver cup! Nino immediately struck up a lively air, and sang something about a lover's thanks to his mistress, for the favours she had bestowed, and the boat passed on; and he remarked to Spikely, who had picked up the cup from the bottom of the boat, and was examining it with the eye of a connoisseur, "There's no doubt about it's being silver; and whatever its form now, 'twill soon change it: those arms upon it would tell a tale too plainly for me to feel quite safe while it was in my possession."

"They are those of the Earl of Shrewsbury," said Spikely.

"They are," replied the other; "and that was his mansion we have just left. Every week, *mia bella* there drops love's offerings from yon casement, into the bark of her faithful gondolier. I give her love, and she gives me whatever she can lay her hands on; she's worth her weight in gold to me, and may be of wondrous use to us in working out the plan we have formed."

In a like strain they continued to converse until they reached the Whitehall Stairs, where they landed, and at once bent their course towards that portion of the Palace appropriated to the offices, over which the Lord High Admiral had control.

CHAPTER XXVII.

THE WITHERED BLOSSOM.

This world is but a thoroughfare full of woe,
And we be pilgrims passing to and fro:
Death is an end of every world's sore.—CHAUCER.

EVENING had begun to close, when Edward Osborne and the Bridge-shooter arrived at the Cottage on the Heath. To their great astonishment, they found Alyce and her daughter as much surprised at their arrival, as they themselves were at discovering their visit to the Heath so perfectly unlooked for.

They had much to tell each other, but the conversation turned to the fate of poor Lillis.

"Poor girl!" observed Anne; "I fear me she is too pure, and too innocent to be allowed by Heaven to remain long upon this wicked earth. Ever since the day on which I and Master Lerue found her in the ruins on the Heath, she has scarcely spoken, and there is such a fixed, such determined melancholy upon her mind, that at every moment it seems to be eating away her life. She has some secret sorrow preying upon her mind, I am certain, but of what nature I cannot guess; nor could I tempt her to disclose aught that might give me a clue to discover any way of bringing relief to her wounded mind."

So intently were all their minds fixed upon the subject, that they were not aware, until the moon had risen high in the heavens, how long they had been talking upon the melancholy theme.

Just then Anne happening to raise her eyes towards the window, suddenly uttered an exclamation of fear, that caused them all to start to their feet. "I am certain," she said, "I saw a man looking in at the casement."

"Did you, Mistress Anne?" said the Bridge-shooter, starting towards it; "then I'll just ask him what he wants, and—"

"No, no,—do not venture; it may be one of those desperate people that are continually prowling about."

"If so," observed Edward, "I think the sooner we make him prowl somewhere else the better!"

Saying this, and before Anne could prevent him, Edward flew to the outer door, followed by the Bridge-shooter; when it was opened they found a country lad standing before them; he was crying, and panting for breath, and appeared exhausted with running.

"Was it you who looked in at the window?" enquired Edward, in an angry tone.

"Hoiy?" exclaimed the lad, "not hoiy, maister! Hoiy know my place better nor that."

"Then did you observe any one else doing so, as you came up?" said the Bridge-shooter.

"Hoiy? not hoiy, maister!" again exclaimed the lad, as well as his sobbing and his lack of breath would allow him; "hoiy seed no 'un looking in!"

"But, why do we find you here? What want you?" enquired Edward.

"Hoiy wants young missus; and my young missus wants her too!"

"And who is your young *missus*?" said the Bridge-shooter.

"Why, don't you know? 'gad hoiy thought every fool knowed my young missus, bless her! It only shows that you are not a poor 'un, or you'd a known my young missus, bless her! All the poor 'uns about these parts knows maister's daughter, Lillia, bless her!" Here he blubbered aloud.

Anne recognising the voice of the lad, came to the door, and enquired if Lillia had sent him.

"No, not she," was his reply; "not she, bless her!"

"Then who did?" said Edward.

"Moll, the milkmaid!" exclaimed the boy; "Moll sent hoiy; and told hoiy to run loike mad up to the cottage; to tell you that young missus is as bad as bad can be, bless her! so Moll says, and Moll says, that young missus says, that she wants you to come

to her directly ; and hoïy'm to take care on you, down to the Ferry."

" No, my good lad, I have others to take care of me," said Anne ; " so do you run back again as quickly as you can, and say that I will be there almost as soon as you are."

A few minutes after, and Anne, with Edward, followed by the Bridge-shooter, was on her way towards the Ferry.

They had just passed the end of a cross-road, and had not gone many steps beyond, when they were caused to start, by hearing a female voice calling loudly, " William ! William ! William !"

It was Flora, returning to the cottage ; she had caught sight of her lover as he passed the end of the road.

" Well," she said, " that old gipsy must have been a witch, for she told me I should find something precious at a cross-road."

" And you find my precious self there," said the Bridge-shooter, giving Flora a hearty embrace ; " and now you shall go to the Ferry with us."

" I can't," said Flora ; " I've got all my things in the waggon, and I must not leave them."

Anne, guessing at William's feelings, insisted up n his accompanying Flora home, " being," as she said, " quite safe without more protection than what Edward could bestow."

The Bridge-shooter did not wait to be pressed to return, but at once told the driver to push forward, and placing Flora's arm in his own, the two trudged ou happily together behind the waggon—" in order," as he said, " to enjoy the beauty of the evening," but in reality, to have a little bit of comfortable chat unnoticed ; while Edward and the lovely Anne proceeded to the Ferry-house ; and leaving Osborne in the room below, Anne ascended to the apartment of the drooping Lily of the Inn.

" Oh, bless you, dear Anne !" said Lillia, in a sweet

but feeble voice, as she raised herself slowly on her couch; "oh, bless you, for this kind, this prompt attention to the wishes of a poor miserable girl!"

"But why miserable, Lillia?" said Anne, kissing the pale lips of the sufferer; "why say miserable, when hope seems to have once more dawned upon the fortunes of your father?"

"It was to tell you why," replied Lillia, "that I have prayed your coming hither—I am dying! and it is because I fear my little remaining life will pass away before my poor father once more shall look upon his child, that I would say to you all I had intended to confess to none but him. Tell him all, dear Anne, all I shall say to you! 'Twill kill him, Anne! I feel my death will kill him!"

Anne wept bitterly, and in the hope of bringing her relief, she kindly pressed Lillia at once to ease her mind of what she wished to disclose.

Lillia gazing at Anne with a look of intense feeling, exclaimed—"You, you are the cause!"

"I," exclaimed Anne, in a tone of perfect wonderment; "I the cause of your sorrow?"

"Do not think," replied the poor girl, "that I have called you here to upbraid you—Heaven forbid! You knew not that giving life to another's hopes, was bringing death to mine."

"You speak in riddles, Lillia, indeed you do," said Anne; "what other mean you?"

"Walter," replied Lillia, "Walter Lerue! I loved him, more than my life I loved him." Again she burst into tears.

Anne remembered the scene that had taken place in the ruins of the chapel, the evident confusion that had seized upon Lerue, when first he discovered the senseless form of Lillia lying on the earth; his precipitate retreat the moment Lillia had been conveyed to the cottage, and his continued absence, while she was there. The truth seemed at once suddenly to flash upon her mind.

Anne endeavoured by every means she could devise to raise a hope in Lillia's breast, feeling that hope was the only medicine that could cure the wounded mind. She told her truly how indifferent Lerue was to herself; that with the one slight exception, all his acts to her had ever been but those of common courtesy.

And having taken an affectionate leave of her suffering friend, she left her with her father, who had just returned from London, recounting all the happy chances that had befallen him while away, and how his dearest hopes had been most strangely consummated.

Anne rejoined young Osborne, and they hurried on towards their home. When they arrived at the cottage, they found the Bridge-shooter awaiting them at the gate.

"Master Edward," said the Bridge-shooter, "were you ever surprised in your life? Who's the last person you would ever expect to find beneath this roof?—But you'd never guess; so come in and see."

When Osborne entered the room, he certainly was surprised, for he beheld not only his master, whom he believed to be in Holland, but also the Cripple of the Bridge-gate-tower, and by him the blind Eoline.

In order to explain how the Cripple was beneath the roof of Master Hewet, we must take the reader back to the night of the storm. When the merchant and his brave companions had approached as near as they dared to the fatal sands, they plainly saw that there were at least two persons upon them still alive: and after running many risks they at last succeeded in saving two helpless beings from a watery grave.

So imperfect was the light of the breaking day, so altered by fear and suffering were those they had rescued, that it was not until they were once again safe in the ship, that the merchant recognised in the man, the Cripple-of-the-bridge, and in the helpless female, the blind Eoline.

When the sufferers were somewhat recovered, and

there being strong reasons why the Cripple should not be supposed to be in England or even alive, the merchant and his companions had journeyed at once, after landing on the Sussex shore, towards the Heath—Eoline conveyed in a litter, borne along by two horses; the merchant and the Cripple walking the greater part of the way on foot, on either side of the litter.

The merchant was relating all the circumstances of his wonderful escape, when who should be announced but Walter Lerue!

"I am right glad he has come," said the merchant; "for now I can thank him heartily for saving you, my Alyce dear, and my no less darling child."

"You will be charmed with him," replied Alyce, "he is so clever, so amiable, and Anne says, so handsome: between ourselves, I think she is half in love with him."

When Lerue entered, he was, for a moment, confused at finding so many persons where he had expected and hoped to have found but two. The merchant waited not for any introduction, but taking him cordially by the hand, first thanked him for the service he had rendered his wife and child, and then gave a hearty welcome to the cottage. Anne, in spite of her endeavours to appear as usual, could not cast off a feeling of restraint, which the knowledge she had that night gained from the pale lips of Lillia, would force upon her. Osborne sat moodily in one corner, and became more moody when he saw the handsome appearance and superior style of bearing which belonged to Walter Lerue. The moment Flora cast her eyes upon him, she whispered to William—"I am sure I have seen that face before, or one so like it, that it seems to me the same. Do you know any one like this Master Lerue, William? I am much mistaken if he is not the Lord George Talbot who you remember gave a ring to Edward many years ago;" and she eyed him so suspiciously that he evidently felt uneasy at her scrutiny.

"Egad! and now I look again," replied the Bridge-shooter, "it is the very fellow that made me so jealous when first I loved you. But why is he here in disguise?"

When all was now made ready for the accommodation of Eoline and the Cripple, they arose, and Lerue, taking advantage of the opportunity, bade a quick adieu, and left the room. As he went out he gave Flora a peculiar look, which she guessing the meaning of, said—"I'll lock the outer gate, William!" and without waiting a reply, followed Lerue.

When they were out of the house, he turned to Flora, and said—"You know me!"

"I do!" she replied. "But why is Lord Talbot here under a false name?"

"For the same reason, perhaps," retorted the young lord, "that Master William Hewet takes the name of Allen. Keep my secret," he continued, "and your reward shall not be stinted; as earnest, take this gold."

"I want not gold," said Flora: "I have a treasure within more precious than gold."

"Indeed! what is that?"

"My young mistress's fame." As she uttered these words, she closed the gate, and hurried into the cottage.

"That stupid girl will spoil all," said he. "But why should I dread the disclosure? He who is to be the Earl of Shrewsbury cannot marry a clothier's daughter; and why this continued folly? To-morrow I will at once to town; and now I am again reconciled to my father, will endeavour, by gaiety and courtly pleasures, to forget the Beauty of the Heath."

While this scene was passing at the cottage, a very different one was taking place at the Ferry House. The old father had returned with a heart filled with hope and joy, for he thought the news he brought would have filled with hope and joy poor Lillia's heart; so with a joyous smile he sat beside the bed, and began to recount the unlooked-for success he had met

with in his application to the Court—"Oh, Lillia, how happy we shall be!" said the old man to his child. "all my troubles are now for ever passed. I am wealthy, Lillia, doubly wealthy, for I have thee as well as gold. See here," he said, as he took forth some official looking documents—"this is a deed that restores to me all my former wealth; this is a commission in the king's service—this—but these are things I can show you to-morrow, dear, for now it is growing late, and rest will do you far more good than the prattling of an old man's tongue."

"No, do not leave me yet," said Lillia, "for I shall never sleep again until I have told you a secret, father, the only one I have ever kept from you. And now, if indeed we are rich——" a blush came over her features, for she thought of him she loved; the scene in the ruined chapel rose up in her mind, and seemed to rob her of the little hope she had been endeavouring to foster in her heart. At last, after hesitating more than once, she said—"It is of Walter Lerue——"

"Walter Lerue!" exclaimed the old man, not waiting for Lillia to finish her sentence; "may Heaven's blessings light upon him! Would you believe it, Lillia, but is it true, dear child, that to Walter Lerue, the poor artist, who seemed scarcely able to pay the simple charges of our Inn, to him it is I owe all my present happiness. No friend had I to state my wrongs to those, by whom alone those wrongs could be redressed, and I was on the point of returning in despair, when suddenly I was summoned to the Palace of Whitehall; there I met my benefactor; he placed in my hands these papers—then hurried from me before I knew their worth—before I could offer him my thanks."

When poor Lillia heard her father's words she burst into tears; for now hope once more took firm hold upon her heart; could he love another, and do all this for her poor father? No; she must have been

mistaken; her overwrought love must have blinded her reason; thus did she think, and for a moment she was happy.

"But stranger than all," said the old man, "was the discovery I soon after made; for I found that this same Walter Lerue was no other but the heir to the great Earl of Shrewsbury, young Lord George Talbot. What ails you, child?" exclaimed the father; "heavens, your face has become deadly pale! Speak, speak, Lillia, Lillia, speak!" He clasped her in his arms; she made several efforts as if to find something that lay near her heart; she drew forth her hand, and flung from it a flower—it was Lerue's first offering, and had ever since been treasured in her breast. She made two or three convulsive efforts to throw her arms round her father's neck—one deep-drawn sigh that seemed as though it was her soul taking her flight to Heaven—and she was dead!

CHAPTER XXVIII.

A SECRET DIVULGED.

And have well founden by experience,
That dreames be significations.
As well of joy, as tribulations,
That folk enduren in this life present,
There needeth make of this no argument,

CHAUCER.

It had been settled on the previous night, that the merchant and the Bridge-shooter should return to London in the morning, leaving Edward at the cottage, to attend upon his former friend, the Cripple, who for certain reasons was to be kept out of sight, until matters should be more matured.

Osborne was delighted with the arrangement, for as yet he had not been made acquainted with all the strange causes that had brought the Cripple once more

to England, and had placed him beneath the roof of him the Cripple had formerly held in detestation.

As the merchant intended to go by water, it was settled that Anne should accompany her father as far as the Ferry, being anxious to hear tidings of her young suffering friend.

As Osborne was to go with them, in order to escort her home again, the Cripple, who was as anxious to tell Edward all that had befallen him and his adored Eoline as Edward was to hear the tale, determined to stroll along with them.

"Wonders will never cease, Master Edward," said the Cripple, "never, never! You must have been strangely surprised to find the Cripple of the Bridge-gate-tower a guest of Master Hewet—were you not?"

"That I was surprised to see you at the Cottage of the Heath, I cannot deny," replied young Osborne: "but that you should one day become the merchant's guest does not surprise me; for I knew his goodness and your good sense, and that time would remove whatever prejudices you had unjustly nourished against him; but what first brought about the change?"

"An angel," replied the Cripple, "a child of earth, but with a mind of heaven—Eoline."

"As you yourself have broached the subject," said Osborne, "tell me, Willy, what was your first cause of hatred to the merchant?"

"This misshapen trunk," said the Cripple, looking down upon his own deformity; "this, and a father's and a mother's death," I believed I owed all three to him! and all I panted for was the revenge of placing his head upon the Bridge-gate-tower."

"But what mean you, Willy," enquired Osborne, "by laying to the merchant's charge your difference in form to other men?"

"It is a sad tale, and did I tell you all, you would feel why I held the merchant in such hate. The fiends who blasphemously called themselves the preachers of Christ's mercies condemned my father

to the flames, because his conscience saw not with eyes like theirs; because he believed that God was to be propitiated by penitence before himself, not by the intercession of some painted doll; and I was ever taught by the poor demented being I called my mother, that merchant Hewet was the sole cause of our undoing. I know the error now, but it was believed by those nearest to me, that from information given by William Hewet, then a mere boy, my father was condemned for *Heresy*. And then came the last, the fatal scene. It was enacted in that place of fire, of torture, and of blood, Smithfield. There stood the pulpit, from which naught but charity and peace to all mankind should ever flow, but now erected to sanction the tortures of earthly flames, and to send to flames eternal, were it in the power of man to do so, the upright soul of one, who merely differed in outward form of worship of that God whom he and his accusers both knelt before and called all-merciful. When all else had failed to shake my poor father in this dreadful moment of earthly trial, what did the miscalled *holy* fiends do then? they brought his wife, my mother soon to be, the idol of his heart, the bliss or anguish of his every thought—they brought her to him while fastened to the stake—they forced her on her knees to pray of him to save his life, by renouncing what they called his damning heresy; and when this attempt to subdue affrighted nature failed, they placed a burning brand within her grasp, and by force compelled the wife to fire the fatal pile that was to consume her husband; and amidst the cries of agony of a dying father, and the shrieks of a mother maddened by her anguish, I was untimely born! Can you wonder that I could never look upon these deformities without remembering the dreadful cause that brought such a monster upon earth. I had always been led to believe that the merchant had been the denouncer of my father, and by that denunciation was the cause of a mother's early grave. Ever

insult that an unfeeling world heaped upon me, engendered in my heart another drop of bitter gall, to poison my mind against Master Hewet. But I was wrong, as all are who foster hate. The merchant had never wronged me or mine; this was by chance made clear to me by the Abbess of St. Clair." And then he related, what the reader already knows, that Spikely had been found amongst the dead, and had been taken to the dwelling of the Cripple, and that he had, when he believed himself upon the point of death, made a confession to the Abbess, of things of great importance to Eoline: amongst others he divulged that Horton had stolen the documents that alone could prove the rights of Eoline, whatever they might be.

"And think of our surprise," continued the Cripple, "to discover, concealed in the very mattress upon which he had conveyed Eoline to the ship, years ago, the treasure which the Abbess alone knew the value of, and which she had believed was for ever lost. Who the wounded soldier was he would never disclose. or how he came to the knowledge which was of such worth to us. The instant he had recovered sufficiently to leave his couch, he departed from our house, and since that time we never heard more concerning him."

"Then it is to prosecute Eoline's claim," enquired Edward, "that has brought you here? but who and what is she then? She was always regarded as a poor orphan, kept at the convent out of charity."

Before the Cripple could reply, they heard a great shouting, from a crowd assembled in the little market-place, for they had now entered the town.

"What is the matter?" enquired the merchant of one of the bystanders.

"Oh, no great matter," replied the man, "only Master Blaze, the smith, going to sell a beggar; and why there is such a crowd, do ye see, is because this is the first beggar that has been sold since the passing

of the act; there won't be many beggars soon, but there'll be lots of slaves." Then, in a whisper, he said, "I mean to buy him if I can."

As the fellow said this, he started off nearer to the spot where a sort of large table had been placed, and upon which the smith, the worthy Master Blaze, immediately mounted, attended by a tip-staff, who read, in a loud voice, the new act—"Statute I, Edward VI., c. 3, laying great emphasis upon the words which empowered the master *to sell*, bequeath, let out for hire, or give the service of their slaves to any person whomsoever, upon such conditions, and for such term of years, as the said persons be adjudged to them for slaves, after the like sort and manner as they may do of any other of their moveable goods and chattels."

Anne, who until that moment had not looked towards the disgusting scene, now raised her eyes, and suddenly clinging to her father's arm, exclaimed—"Gracious Heavens! 'tis the poor old man!—father, father, 'tis he!"

"Whom mean you, child?" enquired the merchant, not comprehending why she could be thus suddenly moved.

"'Tis old grandfather," she said. She saw before her the only being who had made the miseries of her childhood endurable; she would have sprang forward to embrace her never-to-be-forgotten saviour, had not the merchant held her back.

"Hush," whispered her father; "be calm, all will be well yet."

The merchant himself could not at such a time resist a powerful emotion. He was in his mind looking upon a scene of years gone by; that scene of bliss, wherein he beheld his long-lost child, as by a miracle, restored to his longing arms, and he once again exclaimed, "God's blessing light on him! he shall be happy, if wealth can make him so!"

He whispered something into the ear of the

Cripple, who, mixing with the crowd, approached very near to the platform.

There were but two bidders—the man who had answered the merchant's enquiry, and the Cripple. The cripple became the purchaser.

"For what have you bought me?" said the old man, as the Cripple walked away with him; "for what have you bought me? I'm old and weak—I can't work—I only wish to die."

"I've bought you for a lady's toy," replied the Cripple, smiling, "and for one who could, an' she would, make a thousand better men than you or I her slaves; and that you'll own, when you shall see your mistress, and here she is."

"Great Heavens!" he exclaimed, "and have my prayers been heard; and do my eyes once again gaze upon the poor wronged thing, that I so loved—so often prayed to see once more?"

"Tis I, indeed, grandfather," replied Anne; "and here stands my real father, him of whom I used to tell such tales; and here is Edward, too: you remember Edward. And here is the Bridge-shooter, Willy of the Bridge-gate-tower, that we used to talk about so much.

The old man looked from one to the other, as Anne pronounced their names, but seemed completely lost; then fixing his eyes intently upon her face, began to examine every feature—"Yes, yes," he at last exclaimed, "it is the poor wronged child, the little Anne that I so loved!"

It was then explained, that the merchant for years had been endeavouring to discover the protector, the saviour of his darling child; and that having, as by a miracle, at last found him, he should no more want a protector, or a home.

He was placed under the care of the Cripple, to convey him up to the Cottage on the Heath, while the merchant, on their way to London, with the Bridge-shooter, hurried to the Ferry, and Anne,

placing her arm within that of Edward, proceeded towards the little Inn, where they learned that Lillia was no more.

Anne wept bitterly at hearing the sad fate of her she had loved with a sister's love.

"Let us not hurry home, Edward," said Anne, as they came to a road that turned to a uper part of the heath; "after a time I shall be more myself: let us stroll through this lovely lane, and do you tell me something, anything, to change my present unhappy thoughts."

"I am but in a poor mood," replied Osborne, "to talk cheerfully, for my whole thoughts are bent upon a subject, that when you shall learn the end to which it leads, I think you will own that I have cause for being unhappy."

"What mean you, dear Edward?" exclaimed Anne, his words filling her with surprise.

"Anne," he said, "I have been long wishing to ask your advice—to tell you the plans I have formed for my future life. Do not be surprised at what I shall now tell you. You know the great interest your good father possesses abroad amongst the merchants there. I have discovered that ere long the manager of the English Factory at Antwerp, will leave that station, and 'tis my intention to solicit it, through your father's means. It will be a bitter parting when I leave all I ever loved, to seek my fortune in a foreign land; but, since my mind has taken a turn, unknown to all but myself, I feel it would prove, oh, far more bitter still, were I to remain! Do not ask me the cause of this determination, for I will never breathe the secret to mortal ear: do not attempt to persuade me to alter my fixed resolve; it would but add another pang, without even shaking my now firmly-rooted intention. When I do leave England—it will be for ever."

So unlooked for was the revelation she had heard, that for a moment, the astonished girl could not utter

a word; and when she did she scarcely knew what she said.

"Oh, Edward, Edward!" at last she exclaimed; "were not your words too cruel for a jest, I would not, could not think you serious. Leave us! your home! your country! and for ever!—impossible! What says my father to this wild scheme?"

"As yet, he know not of my wishes," replied Edward, "and I dread to disclose it to him. He will ask my reasons, and he is the last on earth that I would reveal them to."

"Reveal them, then, to me!" ejaculated Anne, as she gazed imploringly into his eyes, as though she would through them read the secret of his inmost soul; "confide all your cares, all your sorrows to me; for I fear you have cares, and sorrows too, Edward, that we little dream of."

"Whatever they may be, Anne," he replied, "and I own I have troubles; but they are such, that none but he that suffers beneath their weight, can ever comprehend the pangs that they inflict."

"Then they are troubles of the mind," she replied, "the weightiest of all to bear; we have had a sad proof of this, but now."

"What mean you?" enquired Osborne.

"You know, dear Edward," she replied, "that unlike you, *I* never keep a secret, at least from you. The poor child Lillia, has died I fear—nay, I am certain, from having allowed her mind to eat away her life. Young and innocent as she was, she had deceived herself, and loved."

"And was rejected!" exclaimed Edward.

"No," continued Anne; "but believing that she had betrayed her own affection, to one by whom her love was not returned, she drooped and died."

"Then she was too proud," said Edward, "to ask the truth, and sought the grave, rather than hazard a rejection. She was right; were I to love, I would suffer a thousand deaths, before I would——"

And before he had time to say what he would do he was interrupted by Flora, who had come upon them unawares, and who told them that Dame Alyce and Eoline were in the ruins. Osborne felt rather relieved at the interruption which had broken off a conversation that he began to fear would lead him to betray his secret to her, of all others he would have concealed it from.

When they had joined Alyce and Eoline, they had much to say, first about the death of poor Lillia, the news of which shocked Alyce greatly; then concerning the strange discovery of the old man, to whom Anne had really owed her restoration to her home and her parents. Alyce hearing that by that time he would be at the cottage, hastened away with Eoline and Edward, leaving Anne and Flora to follow them.

CHAPTER XXIX.

AN ATTACK ON THE COTTAGE.

If so were, that I might
Have all his treasure to myself alone,
There is no man that liveth under the throne
Of God, that should live so merry as I.

CHAUCER.

It was a dark and dreary night, and near the midnight hour, when in a miserable room, lighted by a single flickering lamp in one of the most miserable dwellings in the most miserable part of London, two persons might be seen sitting in deep converse. One of the speakers was a man well dressed, and of soldier-like bearing; he was well armed, and before him on the table lay a large pistol. His companion was very meanly dressed; her features, which had evidently been handsome in the days of her youth, were haggard, and bore the impress of early depravity and

care. Her eye was still bright, and from it flashed the light of firmness and determination.—The man was Horton—his companion, Nan, of the monster show.

“If what you say be true,” exclaimed Nan, “then my many troubles begin to end. But you are sure he is dead?” she enquired.

“Sure,” replied Horton—“I saw him with my own eyes expire on the field of battle; so be assured, Nanny, you have nothing to fear from Spikely. But come now,” continued Horton, tell me what you alone can tell, :—Who, and what am I?—for I am not what I seem to be. Who, and what is Eoline?—for she is not what she seems.”

“In both surmises you are right. The world believes her a penniless orphan—you believe her to be your sister. The world and you are wrong.”

“Not my sister!” exclaimed Horton.

“No!” replied Nan. “No blood of hers and yours ever flowed in the same channel. Don’t dash out my brains,” she continued, half laughing, “when I humble the pride of Master Horton, the would-be heir of Horton of Henley—when I tell him that his rightful father was a thief—and that my sister was his mother.”

“Thou liest, hell cat!” broke in Horton. “I came not here for fooleries like these, but to seek truth, and through the truth find fortune.”

“It’s all true,” continued Nan; “and to make all clear to you, I must relate matters that happened before your birth. The man you always thought to be your father, Andrew Horton, had from early youth lived one unaltered course of deep, though secret depravity. Woman was his prey. My sister was one of his many victims. Tempted by a sum of money, one of the Birds of the Clink married my sister—and you are their child.”

Horton again bit his lips and frowned, but held his peace.

“Some time before this, Old Horton wedded with

a girl lowly of birth, but beautiful in face. I was beneath his roof, when his wife bore to him a son; at the same moment you were born; and then it was that the idea entered my mind, what a glorious revenge it would be, to change the children, and make the thief's son Horton's heir, and bring up Horton's son amidst thieves! The thought was scarcely formed before it was fulfilled. Horton's real son grew up a lovely boy, effeminate but beautiful. An old man of great wealth, took a liking to him, and bought him of your mother, promising to make him his heir. Who the old man was, and what became of the boy, I have never been able to learn. You grew up a wayward boy; the blood of your real father was in your veins, and made you what you are. She whom you called your mother had another child, a girl, born in sorrow—for Horton was a brute, and drove his wife almost to madness. I have known her weep until she lost all power of sight—whether this could have influenced the fate of his child that was still unborn, I know not; but when it came into the world it was blind—totally blind: that child was Eoline.”

“But how came she in the convent of the Miuc-ries?” said Horton; “and how knew the Abbess that she was my father's child? or the man I called my father, if it be really as you say.”

“That I cannot answer,” said Nan; “but I know that Eoline and the child of Horton were one; for my sister, taking a religious fit, became one of the poor Clares; and when she died, as she did soon after she had entered, I saw the blind girl there, and knew her: she had been lost before I was driven from his roof, I gloried in knowing it, for, strange to say, the only thing he ever seemed to really love was that blind child: his wife had long before fled from him, and, it is believed, destroyed herself. We must meet again, for I am worn out to-night, and there is much yet to tell, ere our plan can be brought to bear: give me some money, and then leave me.”

Horton, who would have learnt all at once if he could, but knowing the being he had to deal with, felt it would be useless to press her further, placed a purse upon the table, appointed another meeting, and then taking up the pistol, left the wretched apartment. And let us now return to the Cottage at Putney.

So completely occupied had every one at the cottage been, from one cause or another, that Anne and Osborne had not for several days been again alone together. One night, as Flora was attending Anne, previous to her retiring to rest, and telling her all the news she had picked up, she suddenly exclaimed, "but I hope to Heaven that what William says about master Edward may not be true."

"Edward!" ejaculated Anne, "what of Edward?"

"Oh," replied Flora, in a sorrowful tone, "he has told William that he intends leaving us, and quitting England for ever."

"He has told me so too," said Anne, in a tone more sorrowful than the other; "and ever since he did so. I have never been able to think of anything else: what can it mean? Leave us—leave his home—leave all he declared he loved! there must be some good cause for such strange conduct."

"Oh, there's plenty of cause," said Flora, in a tone of voice that seemed to imply she could tell a good deal more if she were asked; she waited, but Anne spoke not; so as Flora had now determined to speak out, she repeated the sentence, "there's plenty of cause."

"Oh, my dear young mistress, it's no use mincing matters any longer—Edward Osborne is dying—yes dying of love for you."

"For me!" exclaimed Anne, turning deadly pale; "that he loves me is nothing new, nor is my love for him a novelty, but it has ever been the simple love of a brother and a sister."

"Yes, and so he thought," said Flora, "until that Master Lerue opened his eyes,"

"Lerue!" exclaimed Anne; "but what can he have to do with it?"

"He has had everything to do with it, and I am very glad he has, for now we know the truth. While Edward could come and see you, and talk to you, and know that no other good-looking fellow came near you, oh! then it was all comfortable enough, then it was all brotherly love, do y'see; but the moment he found a fine handsome young man like Lerue being constantly with you, this change comes over Master Edward."

"But what *can* be done?" enquired Anne, quite innocently.

"What *can* be done? I'll tell you: you see, it is said that 'like cures like;' and so, if Master Edward's heart has been wounded by love, why, let love be the plaster, and do you put it on."

"You are talking like a mad girl, Flora," replied Anne; "indeed you are wrong; Edward has never by word, or look, or deed, betrayed to me that feelings different to those we felt for each other in childhood, had taken possession of his heart."

"Oh, dear! oh, dear! oh, dear!" interrupted Flora, "you young ladies are uncommonly dull of apprehension. Can eyes speak? Can sighs tell tales? Can words sometimes betray their speaker? All this would apply to Master Edward, and yet you tell me he has never, by word, look, or deed, told you that he loves you. But I have another proof, if another proof were wanting—look here!" and as she said this, she took from her pocket a sheet of paper, which she unfolded, and held up by the two corners, as a flag of triumph. "Did ever a young man, and does ever a young man, write poetry if he isn't in love! The thing's impossible! for I have been told that there never was a line of poetry written worth the reading, that had not been penned with the hope to gain the praise of some fair maid—read that."

Anne took the paper, and read—THE DREAM OF LOVE:—

THE DREAM OF LOVE.

I.

The dream of Love, that sweetest dream
That e'er can haunt the midnight hour;
The young maid's hope, the poet's theme,
The sleeper's bliss, the magic power
That to the very soul imparts
A thrill forgotten never more;
For, oh! it brings to youthful hearts
A feeling they ne'er felt before.
Then of all dreams from realms above,
Give me the dream, the dream of Love!

II.

And that sweet dream was mine to-night,
When, oh! how kind she looked, then sighed,
And vowed—oh, rapture of delight!
That soon, yes, soon she'd be my bride.
But then it seemed she false became,
And I was scorned, and loved no more,
But why still weep such fancied shame?
The wrong is gone—the dream once o'er.
Then of all dreams from realms above,
Give me the dream, the dream of Love!

“There now,” said Flora, “there’s a right down new ditty, and Edward is the author.”

And then Anne read it again, and Anne admired it; and then Flora began to find all sorts of faults with it; and said that having shown it to her young mistress, she might as well burn it. And Anne thought so too, but forgot to give up possession of it; but kept it in her hand on her lap, and then she sent Flora down to the parlour to see that all was safe, for she thought she heard a strange noise there; and the moment she was gone, Anne looked upon the song with one of her sweetest smiles; and dare we tell what she then did?—she kissed it, and then carefully, but quickly folding it, placed it in her bosom, just as Flora in evident terror returned, and told her young mistress that she had heard the sound of voices behind the house.

"Your fears have deceived you," said Anne. "We will first be certain, at all events, before we give an alarm. Place the lamp out of sight in yonder cupboard, and I will descend with you and learn the truth."

Neither Anne nor Flora were wanting in courage; but as they quitted the room on tiptoe, and in darkness, they could not prevent trembling as they approached the casement: all was still in that direction. They descended the stairs, and listened at every door that led towards the outside of the dwelling, but all was still; there was but one more place to examine—the kitchen: they lifted the latch of the door; all was still; they entered; when they heard a peculiar sound, as of something placed against the outer door, which seemed to be turning and turning, but very slowly and carefully, as though to cause as little noise as possible; in another moment a blow came against the door, as the part that had been worked upon had given way; something was now withdrawn, and then the same sort of sound was repeated.

Not a moment was to be lost; as quickly as their trembling limbs would bear them, they hastened, Flora to arouse Edward—Anne to awaken the Cripple-of-the-Bridge.

It was some little time before either of the sleepers could be made conscious that danger was at hand; as soon as this was made clear to them, they came forth, bearing all the arms they could muster. What was to be done? Flora was sure, she said, that there were numbers of assailants. Resistance, under such circumstances, seemed hopeless, but still neither Willy-of-the-Bridge nor Edward were men to give in without a struggle. At first, it seemed impossible that they could even alarm the people of the farm, until Anne proposed, nay insisted, upon making the trial herself; the direct road lay across the yard wherein the robbers were, therefore that way was impossible; but it struck her that by leaving the

house by the front, and creeping along beneath the hedges, she might attain her end, and bring aid sufficient to enable them to hold out until the farm servants might call in other assistance: and she cautiously left the dwelling, while the Cripple, with Edward, stole to the kitchen.

They saw an arm pushed through a hole in the door to undo the fastenings, and without hesitation Edward fired.

The robbers finding that secrecy was now of little use, began to batter at the door with heavy beams of wood; but strong as the door was, it soon gave way. Edward and the Cripple fired upon the robbers and then retreated, followed by the assailants. Knowing there would be no time to reload their pistols, they reserved their fire for the last extremity, and the Cripple having found his staff, laid more than one ruffian bleeding upon the ground. From room to room they fought with desperation; when the last kind of relief that could have entered into the mind of either Edward or the Cripple, suddenly appeared in the shape of soldiers armed to the teeth, led on by the Bridge-shooter.

The house was filled with armed men, wounded and dying robbers, and women on their knees, offering up thanks for their unlooked-for preservation. The few thieves that remained were soon marched off; while those that had escaped were being hotly pursued in various directions over the Heath. At last, Edward, who had been to see to the comforts of their deliverers, returned, and enquired if Anne had not yet returned from the farm. All were in a state of alarm, when, on enquiry, it was ascertained that she had not been seen or heard of at the farm. It was at once determined to institute a search for her, and different parties sallied forth over the Heath for that purpose.

The old man of the show took up his staff, determined to aid in the search after his benefactress, the

whole scene near Tybourne Tree being recalled forcibly to his mind. Fervently did he pray, that on this night also, he might be by Heaven selected to be the saviour of the lost child.

When coming near the ruins of the chapel, he was surprised to see several lights within, and approaching one of the ruined windows, he looked in upon a solemn and affecting scene. In the centre was a grave, on each side of which was placed a coffin: at the head of the grave stood a man, reading from a book, the service of the dead in English. The larger coffin was deposited in its endless home; and as the smaller one was just being lifted over the aperture, a country lad in violent grief, exclaimed "Oh, my poor young missus, I shall never see her again, bless her! I shall never see her again—no, never, bless her!"

The old man was greatly moved at this simple but heartfelt grief of the poor lad; and when the grave had been filled up, he followed him as he left the chapel, and ascertained who they were that had that night been consigned to the tomb.

"And only to think," said the lad, "that she should die, and her father should die, and all just when he had got a new name, and a great heap of money."

"A new name, and a heap of money! and what was his new name, eh, my good lad?"

"Algernon Mortley—so they says."

"Algernon Mortley!" exclaimed the venerable inquirer; "how strange!" And it may easily be imagined how painfully he was excited when we tell the reader that this was the name of an elder brother, who had in early life fled from home, rather than enter into a marriage he loathed, and had, until that day, never been heard of again.

Notwithstanding the unhappy circumstances in which he met, as we might say, his long-lost brother, his anxiety for Anne led him to make further fruitless enquiries regarding her fate, and he sorrowfully returned to the cottage, where he ascertained that

every endeavour to discover the lost Anne had proved abortive.

Late as the night was, Edward and the Bridge-shooter determined to hasten to London, to acquaint the merchant with the dreadful news. The inmates of the cottage were safe enough now, for several of the soldiers mounted guard, and the rest were to remain until the morning at the farm. So, taking a hurried leave of their friends, Edward and his trusty companion started upon their midnight journey down the river.

As they went along, the Bridge-shooter informed young Osborne how he had come so opportunely to their rescue—"For once," said he, "I must own, old mother has been as good as a witch. You must know, that this afternoon, she sent for me, and so off to her I went. 'Where is the merchant?' said she. 'Out,' said I, 'and won't be at the Bridge till the morning.' 'Then you must act for him. Ask no questions, but hurry down to the river, get six of the strongest rowers you can, tell them to pull for their lives, and convey you to Putney; when there, get what aid you can, and hasten to the cottage: this much only I can tell you—the cottage will this night be attacked, and plundered, if nothing worse should happen, unless you be there before the clock shall sound the eleventh hour of night.' Hearing this, you may be sure I did not hesitate, so off I started, got my rowers; the tide was with us, and gallantly we cut along: and having by mere chance found some soldiers at the ferry, I pressed them into service, and the rest you know."

As they were just off where the Southwark Bridge now spans the Thames, they passed a boat going at a sluggish pace; two men were rowing, and at the bottom of the boat lay something not unlike a dead body, wrapped round with sailcloth.

"What cheer, friends?" called out the Bridge-shooter.

No answer was returned; both the men stopped pulling, and turned the head of the boat, as if about to land; but seeing the boat with William and his six rowers, now far a-head, they put again into their former course, and passed on. When they arrived at Old London Bridge, the two men fastened the boat to the sterling, under the arch beneath the Cardinal's Hat; a signal being given, the trap above was opened, and a ladder let down. A man was seen holding a torch from the trap-door—that man was Brassinjaw. One of the men in the boat, unwrapping the sailcloth, lifted up the senseless form of a female, and thus laden, began to ascend the ladder; the other man remained in the boat to steady it—this was Nino, the Italian; the first was Spikely. We need scarcely say, that the senseless form he carried, was that of the lovely Anne.

CHAPTER XXX.

THE ABDUCTION.

Let take a cat, and foster her with milk
And tender flesh, and make her couch of silk;
And let her see a mouse go by the wall,
Anon she waiveth milk and flesh and all,
And every dainty that is in that house:
Such appetite hath she to eat the mouse.

CHAUCER.

WHEN the merchant heard of all that had happened at the cottage, and of the second loss of his child, his agony was extreme. As Edward and the Bridge-shooter, who were little less affected than Master Hewet, were endeavouring to console the bereaved father, by raising hopes which they themselves did not believe in, they were told that a sea-faring man was waiting below and wanted to see the merchant. Edward feeling how impossible it would be for their

master to receive any stranger, overwhelmed as he was with grief, descended to enquire the object of the visitor. He had been gone but a very few minutes, when he returned, and beckoned to the Bridge-shooter, who quietly left the room.

"You must go immediately with this man," said Edward, "wherever he may take you; he is a Dutch sailor, and jumbles his own language with the few words he knows of ours in such a manner, that it is hopeless to discover what he really means, further than that somebody belonging to Merchant Hewet is wanted immediately upon affairs of moment.

The Bridge-shooter, who, as we have before seen, never stayed to dispute any order given to him by Edward, made a very few minutes suffice for his preparations, and immediately started off with the Dutch sailor.

When Osborne returned to the merchant's room, he found him much more composed; the first flood of grief was passed away, and he determined at once to leave the Bridge and hasten to the Heath, that he might give whatever little comfort lay in his power to his beloved Alyce.

"And, besides," said he, "I must not forget, in giving way to the grief of a father, the duties of a man. I have much to say to Willy concerning Eoline, which if delayed may be their ruin. I had but just before my return learnt strange things regarding their affairs, and I became overjoyed at the discovery I had made, when your fatal news sunk my heart into despair."

When the merchant had gone, Edward gave way to his own wretched feelings. If he had formerly been unconscious of his love for Anne, he was so no longer; her loss drove him almost to madness. Willingly would he have laid down his own life, could he have restored her to her once happy home.

He remained for a time lost in thought, picturing to himself all the early scenes in which he had been

so happy as a boy, when first he had watched the tottering steps of the baby Anne. He had loved her from the first, but little dreamt he then that that child would one day be his heart's sole hope, and yet that heart's despair. All at once he was start'ed from his reverie, by hearing a strange voice close to his ear exclaim—"Be'st asleep, maister Ed'ard?"

Osborne looked towards the speaker, and there saw the country boy from the Ferry-house at Putney.

"And what want you, my good lad?" enquired Edward.

"Oh, nothing, only you," replied the other. "Hoivy comed from the odd-looking chap that's now at the Cottage on the Heath."

Edward starting up, asked anxiously, "Had they found her?"

"No, not exactly her," said the boy; "but they a' found summut, which hoivy'm to give to you, for you to give to Master Allen."

"But what is it you have to give me?" said Edward, rather sharply.

"Oh! here it be's," said the boy, producing a badge, such as were then worn on the arm by serving men; and he also delivered a note hurriedly written by the Cripple, which was to the effect—"that in again searching the line of road by which it was imagined that Anne would endeavour to reach the farm-house, they hsd found the ground much disturbed, as if a violent struggle had taken place there; more than one piece of torn female attire also was lying about, and in a bedge through which a way had apparently been forced, the badge was discovered."

When Osborne had d'smissed the lad, he began to examine the badge more attentively. "It is certainly strange," he said, "that such a thing should be found in such a place; this is evidently the badge of the house of Shrewsbury, and it is not likely that any servitors of that great family would be linked with thieves. As he stood gazing upon the badge, his eye

fell upon the ring which young Lord George Talbot had given some years before, and he remembered the promise which had then been given. "How little did I then think," said he, "that I should ever wish to put such a promise to the test, nor would I now were it to serve myself; but for her, oh! what would I not do?"

How Anne had fallen into the hands of those who now held her close prisoner may be thus explained. Nino, who was an Italian of the worst description, had discovered the attachment which Lord George, while disguised as Walter Lerue, had formed for the trader's daughter of the Heath, and he immediately began to speculate upon the probability of turning the affair to his own benefit. Once having made up his mind that something must be done to reinstate himself in the good graces of his young lord, whose estimation of him, lately, he felt had been greatly lowered, he determined to sacrifice the trader's daughter for his own advancement.—"You see," he said to Spikely, whom he had made a participator in the plot; "you see that although Lord George would not condescend to ask my aid in such an affair, and would fain be thought too honourable to sanction such a proceeding, he will, believe me, be mad with joy, when he finds her snug beneath his own roof, and in his power."

So trifling an affair did the abduction of a *trader's* daughter appear in those days. There happened just at this juncture, a circumstance which caused Nino great annoyance, for in it he saw much inconvenience to himself, and loss to his purse—this was the unexpected dismissal of Mona from her employ, and that dismissal attended with such disgrace, that it was hopeless for her to attempt to obtain a like position, at least where she was at all known. In this extremity she had flown to her lover, Nino; and he, not knowing what better to do with her, had persuaded Brassinjaw to allow her to remain, for a time, at the "Cardinal's Hat."

Fate seemed to be working in aid of their infamous plan; the very night they had fixed upon for visiting the Heath, and watching their opportunity of seizing the girl and carrying her away, was the same which another party of wretches had chosen as a fitting one for committing the robbery of the Cottage.

By Anne having gone a very circuitous road to reach the Farm, she had, by the very precaution she was taking to avoid danger, fallen into one, that could she have known the truth, she would have regarded with a thousand times more horror than the certainty of death by the hands of the robbers.

Anne having left the Cottage some distance behind, flew forward as swiftly as her limbs would carry her, and was just turning the corner of a narrow lane, when she came suddenly upon the two wretches.

Nino caught her in his arms, exclaiming—"Holloa, my pretty wench, whither so fast? 'tis late at night for petticoats to be flying about the fields—is it not?"

"For mercy's sake!" exclaimed Anne, endeavouring with all her might to free herself from his grasp, "oh! for mercy's sake do not, do not detain me! I am flying for help—robbers are at the Cottage!"

"Diavolo!" ejaculated Nino, "it is the girl herself; quick, quick, away with her! Fool! why do you scream and struggle so? 'Tis useless to resist."

But Anne struggled on, and louder screamed than ever; for one moment she freed herself, but her strength was gone, and falling into a swoon upon the earth, became their unresisting prey.

When they had conveyed her to the boat, they watched for returning animation; the moment life appeared they placed a draught to her lips; unconscious of what she did, she swallowed it. It was a powerful narcotic. Soon did its mysterious power lay to rest every feeling; and thus in a profound sleep was the wretched Anne conveyed to Old London Bridge, and placed under the charge of Mona.

CHAPTER XXXI.

REVELATIONS.

That soundeth unto the gentleness of love —
As on a tomb is all the fair above.
And under is the corpse, such as we wot ;
Such was this hypocrite, both cold and hot.

CHAUCER.

It will be necessary here to explain the provisions of old Horton's will. When he died it was discovered, much to Horton's dismay, that his reputed father's property was all left in trust—the bulk for the benefit of Eoline, and a very slender provision for himself. It was also provided, that in the event of Eoline not being found by a certain distant date, or if her death could be proved before such date, that the whole of the property should come absolutely to Horton. It may easily be imagined, therefore, how much he was annoyed when he was informed by Nan of his true parentage. During the course of that conversation, Nan in counting her many wanderings, had told him that she had returned from the continent in the same ship with the Cripple, Eoline, and the Abbess ; and that in the shipwreck all on board had perished but herself.

As Nan was the only one cognizant of his not being in reality old Horton's son, he saw no obstacle to his getting possession of the wealth of his reputed parent, if he could purchase Nan's silence, and induce her to come forward as a witness to prove Eoline's death.

It was not long before he managed to secure both points in his favour by making very liberal arrangements with Nan, and giving proper legal documents to secure her a comfortable income for life. The giving documents of any kind was rather distasteful to Horton—he wanted her to trust to his honour

and the affection which he must entertain for his *Aunt*, but on this point Nan was inexorable. and Horton was obliged to yield. "Natures never alter," said she to him; "a rat's a rat, and a rogue's a rogue—it is knowing this which makes me guard myself from you."

These preliminaries being at least satisfactorily adjusted, Horton made application to his trustee, but found that his claim to the property was contested, and that he must prosecute it in a court of law.

He lost no time in preparing for the trial—he secured the services of that eminent Counsel, Sergeant Thunderdown, and confidently awaited the result.

A few days after the abduction of Anne, the eventful morning that he hoped would make him a wealthy man at last arrived.

Nan, in the meantime, believing that her husband was dead, had openly assumed his name, and in the sober dress of a widow accompanied Horton to Westminster, where the trial of the case was to come on.

The necessary forms having been disposed of, Sergeant Thunderdown rose, and commencing what he intended to be a very long and very brilliant speech, stated, "that the case entrusted to him was a peculiar case—a case differing from any one he had ever before had placed in his hands. It was a will case—but, unlike most will cases, the will was not disputed in any part of its provisions. He then went on to explain, "that Andrew Horton, deceased, had been married; that the fruits of this marriage had been two children, one a boy, the other a girl; that the girl was born blind; that this child had been lost at a very tender age; that the father would never be persuaded but that one day or another she would be recovered; that it was under these strong feelings of parental love and pity for her blindness, that he had caused the will to be drawn up in the shape it had been. The clause upon which the whole case turned was this—that Andrew Horton, believing that his

daughter would one day be discovered, had left nearly the whole of his wealth away with his son, and had placed it in trust to accumulate for the sole use and benefit of the said daughter, to be rendered up to her at any time she might be discovered; or in case of her not being discovered during twenty years after the death of the testator, then, and not until then, the property was to go to the son, Henry Horton, *unless* it cannot be clearly proved that the lost or stolen child be *dead*—Now the first thing we have to prove is whether the child was born or not."

"We admit the birth, brother Thunderdown," said Whistlepipe, the opposing counsel, "we admit the birth."

"Well, then, the next point we have to prove, is the discovery of the blind child by her brother Henry Horton, in the late Nunnery of the Minorities."

"We admit that fact," again interrupted Whistlepipe.

"Then," said the sergeant, "the two points being admitted—first, the birth of the child, and then the discovery of the child, all I have to prove is the death of the child—and the court," he was sure, "would forgive him being a little lengthy in his remarks, for he shrewdly suspected his learned brother did not intend to allow him a reply; therefore all he had to say he must say now. Had his friend Whistlepipe, intended to produce witnesses——"

"And so I do," observed Whistlepipe.

"Under these circumstances then," said he, "as I shall have a future opportunity of again addressing the court in reply, I shall at once call a witness to prove the death of Eoline."

Dame Spikely was now brought forward for examination. The questions to be asked, were so clearly and carefully laid before the examining counsel, that Nan had scarcely any more to say than "yes, or no," as the case might be; and the circumstance of the wreck being such a well-known fact, there was no

doubt at that moment on the minds of all who heard her, nor was there on her own, but that Eoline had perished with her husband, and the rest of those on board.

To Thunderdown's astonishment, Whistlepipe never once attempted to cross-question her; and when he arose, he began his address by complimenting Dame Spikely upon the clear and straightforward evidence she had given, and that he allowed her full credit for believing every word she had uttered—"But," said he, "how often does error look like truth. Now I shall be able to prove that not one word concerning the death of the blind girl is true." This assertion caused a great sensation, and Whistlepipe went on—"I always go," said he, "to the fountain head at once, therefore the witness I shall produce to prove the existence of the lady in question, will be—the lady herself."

Upon saying this, Eoline was brought forward, as much to the horror of Horton, as to the surprise of Nan. That she was the person saved from the wreck, was soon made manifest by the evidence of the merchant and his brave companions.

There was but one chance now left for Horton, and that at the first glance appeared a strong one; namely, that of obliging the adverse party to prove that Eoline was really the lost child of Andrew Horton. It did certainly lie with the defendant to prove, that the claimant brought forward in the person of a certain blind girl named Eoline, was the child of the deceased Andrew Horton.

Whistlepipe not being prepared for this turn of events, it is difficult to fancy how the case might have terminated, had not, just at this moment, the Bridge-shooter put his head in at the side door, and having caught the eye of the merchant beckoned him out.

In a few minutes the merchant returned, and whispered a few words to their counsel, who immediately replied to Sergeant Thunderdown's enquiry—

"If that was his case?" with "Not quite; I have one witness more to examine. Call in Elizabeth Savage, late Abbess of the Poor Clares." And the Abbess, who appeared half dead from illness, brought on by her sufferings during and after the storm, was carried in, seated in a chair. The disclosures she made astonished all, but none more so than Horton himself; for upon being asked her name, she answered—"I was called Elizabeth Savage; but that is not my name. I am Eoline Horton, and that blind girl is my own child."

She then explained how the shattered boat in which she lay, had been cast upon the shore: that by the care of those who found her, her life had been preserved; that believing herself upon the bed of death, she had prepared a full account of all she was then relating; and that all had been ignorant of her fate till she had sent a foreign sailor to Merchant Hewet to inform him of her being in England.

It was soon found that her strength would never hold out to the end, so it was arranged that her written narrative should be read aloud, and that then she could, as it proceeded, make any observation she might think fit; it ran thus:—

"THE CONFESSION OF A SINNER."

"In very early life I was married, by compulsion, to Andrew Horton, who was rich, but who cared not whom he sacrificed, so that his own desires were accomplished. Weeks and months rolled on; every succeeding one more wretched than the last. I now became a mother; my infant, a boy, was, almost as soon as born, removed from me, and placed under the care of one of his other victims, as nurse to my child. The next year of my life was one of unceasing tears; for weeks I have been totally blind from weeping; it was in this miserable state I bore a daughter; the temporary blindness of the parent fixed itself for ever upon the child—she was born sightless. My

existence became a torture to me; all I prayed for was to die. At last driven to madness by insult and oppression, I fled my husband's home for ever. I entered the abode of the poor Clares; circumstances combined to make me soon the head of that house. One night I pretended to have found a poor blind orphan, but it was false, for the girl I brought was my own child; this pretended orphan was my only comfort—a mother's love being rewarded by a darling child's affection."

The narrative then went on to describe those scenes which the reader has already been made acquainted with; such as the visit of Horton as a commissioner of Cromwell, and how she had checked his licentious course by whispering in his ear that E-line was his sister, although it was long before known to her that Horton was no child of hers; for as Nan had truly stated to him, his real mother had taken refuge in the Convent of the Minorites, and, it now appeared, had, on her death-bed revealed the truth of the children. But here followed a passage in the Abbess's narrative which astonished those who heard it, for it stated that the rich old man, who had taken a liking to, and had, in fact, bought the true offspring of Andrew Horton, and had with it gone to Italy, passing the boy off as his own son and heir, was a baronet named Filbut Fussy, at whose death, the boy, now grown to man's estate, unconscious of doing wrong, and unopposed by any of the relations of his supposed father, laid claim to, and enjoyed all the old man's vast possessions. Thus it appeared that Eoline and the murdered knight were, in truth, brother and sister, and that Harry Horton in no way could lay claim to inherit any portion of the wealth left by Andrew Horton. So well had the Abbess digested her plans to secure to her daughter her rights, that in one part, where confirmation was required of assertions that might appear doubtful without a witness, forth stepped the once-saintly Father Brassinjaw,

who, as former confessor of the poor Clares, disclosed as much (and perhaps a little more), as his priestly oath of secrecy would permit; but in the case of the death-bed confession of Nan's sister, what she had then revealed, was not for the purpose of obtaining absolution, but that those who heard it might one day bear witness to the truth.

The moment Brassinjaw had been informed that his evidence was to ruin Horton, he flew to the task with all the appetite with which we might imagine a hawk would pounce upon a poor defenceless sparrow.

A very short time sufficed to conclude the rest of the affair; and with comparatively light hearts, the Cripple with his now rich wife, accompanied by their friends, quitted the justice court—we say, with comparatively light hearts, for the uncertain fate of the merchant's daughter could not but cast a damp upon their otherwise boundless joy.

Osborne had gone several times to the mansion of the Earl of Shrewsbury, but without having the good fortune to find either that nobleman or his son, Lord George. He prosecuted his enquiries in every quarter the most likely, and even the most unlikely, to gain information regarding the lost Anne: he even consulted the Bridge-shooter's mother, who, this time, honestly confessed herself at fault.

After this visit to the witch of Houndsditch, Edward again visited the Earl's mansion, and this time was ushered into a magnificent gallery, hung round with portraits of the Earls of Shrewsbury, and pictures of many of the great actions of their lives. He had been waiting some time, when a door opened at the opposite end of the gallery to that by which he had entered, and was bewildered to see standing before him Walter Lerue, splendidly attired.

After a moment's hesitation, Osborne said—"I but little expected to meet with Master Lerue in this mansion—indeed, I was told to wait here the coming of the Earl, or of his son—and——"

"And you are welcome, Master Edward Osborne," said Lerue; and as he advanced, he held forth his hand to Osborne, which the latter took, with evident reluctance. "If your heart were as bad as your memory, you would be a much worse man than you ever will be. Look at me again; we are old friends, are we not?"

"Once meeting for an hour at the Cottage on the Heath," replied Edward, "is scarcely intercourse sufficient to form an acquaintance, much less cement a friendship."

"Tut, man," said the other; "why, you cannot surely forget that, but for your timely aid, I had once taken a bath too much off Battersea. Be not surprised, in finding in Master Lerue the heir of Shrewsbury. My memory, Master Osborne, is far better than your own. I remember, too, that you have a ring of mine, and no doubt you have come to claim the promise made, when that ring was given:" and Lord George pushed forward a magnificent seat, and drawing another near to it, said—"As I hope this visit will not be a short one, let us be seated, for though you may have but little to say, I have much, and that, too, of some moment: be seated and speak freely—you have a willing listener."

Edward now began to tell his tale by saying—"You, my lord, having already been somewhat acquainted with the inmates of the Cottage on the Heath, will doubtless be surprised to learn that he who owned that Cottage, was not Master Allen, an humble trader as he there appeared, but——"

"Master William Hewet, the king's great merchant," interrupted Lord Talbot. "You see I know more than you suspected."

"Heaven grant that you may know how to discover the treasure Master Hewet has, I fear, for ever lost!"

"What treasure has that worthy merchant lost?" enquired the other.

"His child!" said Osborne.

"His child!" exclaimed the young lord, "lest his child; surely I must misunderstand your words."

"Alas!" replied Edward, "it is but too true;" and he then recounted the whole of the incidents connected with the attack of the robbers; and that after Anne had left the cottage, in the endeavour to reach the farm unobserved, she had never again been seen. "When you bestowed upon me this ring, you told me, that whenever I required aid, I was to claim it here."

"Whatever aid I, or my house can bring, will be brought right willingly. But how can we hope to solve the mystery?"

"There is a slight chance of obtaining a clue, by the aid of this badge," he replied; and he produced the badge, and explained the circumstances under which it had been found.

"There is more knavery in this," said Lord Talbot, "than we shall perhaps ever fathom; but I think I have a knave that will ferret it out; he is my varlet—by name Nino, an Italian rogue, who, because he did me a service when in Italy, has ever since stuck to me as a blood-sucker."

The young lord went to a side door, and calling the Italian by his name, Nino appeared.

Lord Talbot, holding the badge up suddenly before Nino's eyes, exclaimed—"Whose badge is that?"

"Whose?—why, yours, my lord!"

"I know 'tis mine," replied the other; "but would know who wore it last, and lost it? Had my orders been obeyed, and the badges numbered, we should have known at once whose it was."

"I know," said Nino; "it is doubtless the badge of Philip of the Buttery: he absconded a fortnight since with Mona, our lady's woman; fearful of discovery, he has torn the badge from his arm, and cast it away."

"It may have been as he says," observed Lord Talbot, addressing Osborne. "You may be gone."

Nino bowed humbly, and retired through the door he had entered by.

"I feel that we shall trace but little by this badge; but this I promise, that not an engine of power, that is likely to avail us, but shall immediately be set in motion. And now I would tell you a secret; but for the present, you must pledge me your word not to breathe it to mortal ear." After a pause, he continued,

"No doubt, you must have been surprised to find, that the poor artist of the Heath, and the boy you saved, were one, and that one—Lord Talbot!"

"It was a difference I had had with my father, that made me, for a time, wish to live in concealment. I assumed the character of an artist, being a great lover of the art, though but a poor executant, put up at the Ferry, and strolled about the country with my gun and my drawings, and killed time as well as I could. In one of my rambles, I saw the 'Beauty of the Heath,' for so sweet Mistress Anne was called all the country round.

"You, doubtless, know that fate at last placed an opportunity in my way, of being of some slight service to her: I seized that opportunity of becoming more intimate.

"The unexpected meeting with the merchant on the evening you saw me at the cottage, opened my eyes to the position of the pretended Mr. Allen, and when I left the cottage, I determined never to think of the 'Beauty of the Heath;' but so painful has this absence from her been that I feel that life with her, or death with her, must be my fate: I have, therefore, determined to demand her hand!

"I see you are astonished," continued Lord Talbot. "But what is the world to me, unless sustained by the love of her, in whose love alone life can be honourable?"

"You now know," he said, "the secret feelings of my mind; keep them, at present, locked in your own breast; but the moment sweet Anne shall be restored, it is upon you I depend; you must plead my cause—

you must discover for me the inward feelings of her heart, for *I* cannot stoop to ask and be rejected. In the meantime, be sure that every nerve of mine will be exerted to discover the retreat, or fate of sweet Anne Hewet. I will so arrange, that you shall always find me at a moment's notice."

Osborne, considering the extraordinary turn matters had taken, so contrary to that which he had believed his visit would lead to, managed to leave the young lord's presence with tolerable composure; but the moment he found himself alone, he hurried into a concealed alcove, and gave full vent to his sorrow.

We will not attempt to depict all his agony. If any thing could have blighted the little hope he formerly might have pictured to himself, that last ray of hope was extinguished, by the knowledge of one so great as the young lord he had just left, having determined to offer his wealth and name to the merchant's daughter.

"But I will never see that day—no, no, I will never see that day," he said to himself, bitterly.

While so many were employed in various districts, endeavouring to discover the lost Anne, she was a prisoner within an arm's length of those who dwelt in the house of her birth upon the Bridge. When she had been brought to the Cardinal's Hat, she was at once conveyed to the upper room of the house; this room being lighted by a skylight only, it was impossible for any one confined there to discover, from outward views, where their prison lay. After the powerful draught she had swallowed began to lose its narcotic virtue, returning sense began to assert its sway, and the first time real consciousness returned her eyes met those of Mona, who had been incessantly watching over her from the night on which she had been brought there. Anne started from her couch and screamed.

"What are you afraid of, child?" said Mona.

"Afraid of!" ejaculated Anne; "but who are you?"

and how came I in this wretched place?" She then shut her eyes again for a moment: then, opening them, looked around doubtingly, as though she half fancied she still was in a dream—"Do not look so strangely at me; but speak, speak! where am I?"

"Were I to tell you, perhaps those who brought you here," said Mona, "might think my tongue an inch too long, and cut it off."

"Oh, heavens!" exclaimed Anne, placing both her hands upon her forehead, "what a frightful thought flies through my brain. I remember now the dreadful struggle on the Heath. Oh, tell me, tell me! am I indeed within the power of those wretches?"

"Hush!" whispered Mona. "A villain never likes to hear himself called a villain—speak lower.—I have been watching, anxiously watching for your returning sense; for in your delirium you have uttered words and names that makes me believe the truth has not been told me: speak lowly, but *truly*, and you may perhaps have found a friend in one, who to herself has never been a friend—You love!"

Anne blushed, and looking enquiringly into the face of the Italian girl, answered—"I do! but you and myself are the only two that know it."

"And the name of your love is——"

Anne again blushed as she almost whispered—"Edward; but why do you ask?"

"Because I fancy I am to be deceived, and made a fool of," replied Mona, frowning; "that was the lame you muttered so frequently when your mind was wandering, and made me doubt their tale. They told me his name was George, and that he was a noble of this land."

"George!" said Anne, "I know no human being bearing that name; and never, to my knowledge, spoke a word to mortals above my own humble state."

"Then it is a lie!" exclaimed Mona, starting up, "but a lie that shall stick in his throat until it choke

him. I have been too bitterly deceived by him to be deceived by him again. One way or other, I am to be fooled, and you made their victim!"

"Oh, heavens!" exclaimed the affrighted girl, springing from the couch on which she had been lying, and casting herself upon her knees before the still-frowning Mona. "Oh, save me, save me! I know not where I am—I know not where to look for safety but in you: then, save me, save me!"

The room in which this scene was enacting, was an oddly-shaped apartment at the top of Brassinjaw's dwelling. There was but little furniture in the place; but what there was, was of massive structure. The place was at all times in parts, quite dark; the only light coming through a small skylight in the roof. Beneath this skylight, a sort of gallery passed across, forming a communication between two lofts.

Just as Anne had thrown herself upon her knees, and seized the hand of the Italian girl, a huge ill-looking head might have been seen obtruding from one of the doors at one end of the shattered gallery. It was Brassinjaw, who, like Mona, began to suspect that he was being made a dupe of, and who determined to learn the truth for himself, as far as he could, by listening to all the Italian and the trader's daughter they had stolen away, might say to each other, and, by this means, learn how best to act, for his own advantage.

So eloquently did Anne plead her own cause—so feelingly did she picture the suffering she too well knew her poor mother was then enduring—the agony of her broken-hearted father—the mention of the father's woe, appeared to touch a chord in Mona's breast, whose vibrations thrilled through every fibre of her softened heart, and called up visions of days gone by—visions that memory's eye could never look on but in tears, that she raised the imploring girl—then burried her own face upon the shoulder of Anne, as through a flood of grief she exclaimed—"I know, I

know! oh, it was of a broken heart my father died; and I it was who broke it!"

It now became Anne's turn to offer consolation; and Mona having partially recovered, said—"I have not been thus moved for many a day; but I too had once a home—a happy home; I too was blessed by the love of a doting parent; I too have loved, but therein lay my curse! So blindly mad with love was I for Nino (that was my lover's name) that all warnings proved of no avail; and at last I fled with him, to follow him to this distant land. Although I am now convinced he no longer loves me, the recollection of our early days of affection still clings around my heart; but that slight bond I have vowed to break. It is my fixed resolve to return to my native country, though I should beg my bread at each step I go. I will sin no more. But you must first be saved; your salvation shall prove a slight atonement for one who has done wrong, not loving wrong, but through loving wrongly."

"Oh, bless you, bless you!" exclaimed Anne, throwing her arms round the neck of the Italian girl, "oh, bless you! and know, that if you but save me from the peril I am now encompassed by, no lack of means will have to be endured throughout your journey to your native land, though that journey should extend to thrice the distance round the globe."

"Then are you not the daughter of a poor trader of the name of Allen?" enquired Mona.

"Allen is a name by which I have for some few years been known," replied Anne, "but Allen is not my real one. No, so far from being the child of a poor trader, I am the only daughter of one of the richest merchants of this great city—William Hewet, merchant to the king; but if you could reach his house, alas! I fear far, far away from here, his house on Old London Bridge——"

"Where?" interrupted Mona, "where did you say?"

"On Old London Bridge," replied Anne; "reach

but that, and you will easily find it, for his house is well known there; it stands next to a wine shop called the Cardinal's Hat."

"Hush," whispered the Italian girl, "we are speaking too loudly—be calm, for what I am about to tell you, might, without warning, prove too much for you to hear. Your father's house is there." And Mona pointed with her thumb over her shoulder towards the wall.

"There! what mean you?" exclaimed Anne, feeling there was something in the word she could not comprehend.

"There," repeated Mona, again pointing with her thumb, "there, within a foot of you; this is the wine-house you have named."

Anne was about to utter an exclamation of joy and surprise, but was checked by Mona. "That they have brought you here, is a proof they know you not: be silent, for in silence is your only hope; did they but once suspect who, and what you really are, their idea of safety would be in your destruction."

"Good heavens!" exclaimed Anne, in a voice subdued by alarm and deepened by fear; "and am I truly so near all that is dear to me—all that would shield me, yet dare I not fly to that love—to that protection?"

"Dissimulation is your only hope; I must appear to know nothing, and when I find the opportunity, I will disclose to your friends your peril, then look to them and Heaven for my own safety."

"A swifter plan for our release," said Anne, still almost whispering, "I think I can devise. If this be the house you say it is, there is outside that door—for from that skylight, I imagine this to be the highest room—a staircase leading to yon gallery, which thence leads to the roof; you look astonished at my knowledge of this locality, but by that very stair, some years now gone, I verily believe I did descend to seek for safety, as I now shall mount it with the self-same hope."

"Such a stair does exist," said Mona, "and I comprehend your meaning: not a moment must be lost; we must find safety now or never."

Clinging together, the Italian girl and Anne hastened towards the door—they opened it, when, horror! there stood Spikely, Brassinjaw, and the Italian Nino.

"So, so, my mistress," said Nino, addressing Mona, "you would betray your lover, would you?—fly from him—eh?—But you are easily dealt with." Saying which he suddenly cast a rope with a slip-knot on it, over her neck; then drawing it tight, the poor Italian girl fell to the ground, struggling in strangulation; in another minute, and she was bound hand and foot; the cord was removed from her neck, and the three wretches left the apartment, carrying their victim between them.

Anne was so stupified by this sudden scene, that she stood transfixed, until the secure bolting of the door aroused her. The mere glance she had obtained of Spikely and of Nino, showed her that they were the same with whom she had so fiercely struggled on the Heath. Her only hope lay in instant flight; but how to accomplish it? If she could reach the gallery, might she not thus find an outlet still unbarred?—the trial must be made. The moment the idea entered her mind, she was at her labours. Every thing that she could pile the one upon the other, was brought and placed beneath the gallery. Her feeling now was almost as great for the safety of the Italian girl as for her own. The massive table was dragged to the proper spot: on this she placed the heavy stool, or chair; and then, with other smaller things, she built up a mount, from which she could reach the gallery. How cautiously did she attempt the ascent, yet how determined was every movement! She felt that life or death was in every step. She reached the summit—caught firmly hold of the railing: it suddenly gave way, and she fell backwards to the ground, stunned—insensible.

When the three worthies, Spikely, Brassinjaw, and

Nino, had placed Mona, still bound, in a closet near the lower room—they began to discuss their proposed modes of action. Their discovery, through Brassinjaw, that the Beauty of the Heath was the daughter of Hewet, disconcerted their plans greatly. Nino, too, finding that he had miscalculated his lord's idea of honour, and that from his clever plan, nothing but further disgrace and punishment were likely to accrue, if carried into full effect, was devising some scheme how he could *virtuously* turn his knowledge to account. They discussed what to them was of vital importance—namely, how to dispose of Anne, whom they now knew to be Hewet's daughter. Nino's scheme they felt was much more likely to bring them a rope than a fortune; and both Spikely and Brassinjaw were not over nice in their expressions of anger against him for having led them into such a scrape. So violently did their altercations become, that the Italian drew his knife, and, flying towards the door, which he held in his hand, that he might secure a retreat, swore "that the first who stirred a foot towards him, should find it buried in his side."

"We are all fools," roared out Spikely, "worse than fools, to lose our time in quarrelling, when every moment is of consequence. Sit down Nino, sit down, and let us talk like men! What shall we do with the girl? that is the question."

Nino proposed that they should take her back towards the Heath, in a like state to that in which they had brought her, and there leave her to chance; but this plan Brassinjaw showed at once was absurd; for he overheard enough to let him know that she was fully aware of the place of her imprisonment.

Brassinjaw had inwardly made up his own mind exactly what he should do, which was nothing short of betraying his two friends, and by the restoration of Hewet's daughter, gain all the honour and advantage to himself. But Brassinjaw knew his companions too well not to be very guarded in his movements; so he

put on a more ferocious bearing than either of the others, and swore "he saw no better plan than the trap and water."

"No," said Spikely, "not for her; but there is one who shall taste it, and shall be made to know the treat she is to have before she has it, and that is Nan, I feared that we should never meet again; but we have; and I have dogged her to her hiding-place; if once I can lure her here, she and I will settle our long reckoning; when she's gone, then I can look to my other friends. Horton's my next, but he, the villain, shall be tortured, and soundly too, before I give the *coup de grace*."

"But what are we to do with the girl?" exclaimed Nino, impatient at hearing Spikely talk of nothing else but his own concerns.

"Yes," said Brassinjaw, "what are we to do with the girl? she must not stop here."

Now, that she should stop where she was, was exactly what he wished; and Spikely, hearing Brassinjaw so vehement upon the subject, first of the girl's destruction, and then on the importance of her removal, began to suspect the truth, so said—"Always right, always right, Brassinjaw—leave a priest alone for that. Yes, the girl must not stop here; but I know where she can stay, and safely, until we determine upon her fate, and that is in my old house, by the Black Arch of the Clink," and it was now settled that at ten that night she should be taken to the Clink. Brassinjaw was appointed to mix a strong opiate in her food, so that she might be carried off once more in a sleeping state.

They then broke up their consultation, and each went to his various affairs.

Ever since the attack of the thieves upon Alyce and her daughter, and from which danger Lerue had rescued them, the merchant had determined to bring his family once more to town to a magnificent mansion which he had bought in Philpot Lane, so called

from the name of the owner, Sir John Philpot, who dwelt there.

After the trial at Westminster, the whole of Hewet's party adjourned to his new mansion. Had it not been for the gloom which the loss of Anne necessarily cast upon the feeling of all, how happy would have been that party, at the triumphant termination of Eoline and her husband's troubles. As may be supposed, every care that kindness of heart could imagine, was bestowed upon the Abbess, whose determination was, should she recover, to retire to some convent, in a foreign land, and end her days in prayer and penitence.

The Cripple, notwithstanding the joy he felt at the change which had taken place in his fortunes, would listen to no word but such as touched upon the loss of Anne; indeed, until some tidings of her should be received, all appeared determined not to allow one moment to be passed in selfish happiness.

When Edward returned from the earl's mansion, all were astounded at the news, that Lerue was the Lord Talbot, and the merchant and Alyce scarcely knew how to keep their expressions of gratitude within bounds, when Edward informed them, that Lord Talbot had promised not to leave a stone unturned, in his endeavour to serve them, and to find Anne. For this purpose the merchant and his friends proposed and rejected many new schemes. As in all such cases, one thought one thing, one another; but upon this point they were all agreed, that Anne had been stolen away, most likely for the purpose of gaining a reward for her restoration. This idea turned their thoughts upon the best method of announcing such reward, and, at all events, the reward being offered, would give publicity to the fact of her being missing, and might thus lead to some good end.

They were very busily drawing up an account of the abduction, for such they called it, when a stranger

was announced, as waiting an interview with the merchant, upon business of great importance.

When the merchant entered the large unfurnished waiting-room, in which the stranger was, he saw a man closely muffled in a cloak, and altogether of such a suspicious looking character, that Hewet for a moment paused, as if doubtful whether to close the door behind him or not.

"Be not alarmed," said the stranger, "I am a friend."

"I am not often alarmed," replied the merchant smiling, "but I must own your mysterious appearance does surprise me—what would you with me?"

To which the other replied—"You have lost your daughter! But before I can let you into too much of what you will wish to know, I have a question or two to be answered; and it will depend on the answers I shall receive, whether I throw off my cloak, or depart again unknown. You have lost your daughter; and you would doubtless give a good reward to any one who should put you in the way of finding her?"

"He should be rewarded, to his heart's content," replied the merchant.

"You are a merchant, therefore a man of business," said the stranger, "so I will attempt to speak in a business-like manner; would you give five hundred pounds of right lawful money?"

"A thousand!" said the merchant, in a tone of supplicating anxiety.

"Now, to show you," replied the other, "how much I will do for love to serve you, I will fix the reward at a good five hundred pounds; for the payment I must have your bond; and for the next security I must have your oath: before I speak further you must swear, that you will never drag me forward to give evidence against any one who may have been implicated in the affair. I hazard my life in doing what I do, unless you swear to keep my secret."

"The most solemn vow that the heart can conceive I freely take," replied the merchant: "now, who and what are you—and what is the hope you bring?"

"'Tis not hope I bring," said the stranger, "but certainty—my name is Brassinjaw." Saying this he disclosed himself to the eyes of the astonished merchant.

"Brassinjaw!" he exclaimed, "what, in Heaven's name, can you know of my lost child?"

"Every thing," was the other's reply; "but the share I have taken in this transaction has been done, you may be sure, more out of hope to shelter innocence, than any desire to gain reward. There is one more point upon which you must solemnly pledge me your word, and that is to be guided entirely by me."

"Only restore my lost child to these arms," said the merchant, "and be not afraid either of reward or caution."

Brassinjaw then related how Anne had been brought to the Cardinal's Hat, and that when he accidentally discovered that she was Hewet's daughter he had at once determined to serve her. "My plan," said he, "is a very simple one. At ten this night, it has been arranged by those who brought your daughter to my Inn, that she is to be removed to an old house in the Clink, but whether by the Bridge-road, or in a boat, I am uncertain, so we must be prepared for both emergencies. You must place yourself, with some dozen stout men around the Southwark gate, but not in a way to cause suspicion. And as at that hour the tide will be at its safest, let the Bridge-shooter, and Willy-of-the-bridge, be near the arch beneath my house; and let them have plenty of aid within call. But come which way they will, you will easily know them, for between them they will carry something wrapped round in a sail-cloth; the moment you see them, fly upon them in a body; bind them hand and foot—knock out their brains

if you like, but as you value the safety of my throat let them not escape ; and remember that I am not to be named."

"But you have not told me how we are to find my child."

"Why, in the sail-cloth ? But be not alarmed, to prevent a chance of her screaming she will be put to sleep, sounder than ever but once she slept before ; only keep your faith with me, act to the letter as I have directed, and all will be well for you and yours, however it may turn out for me, or my companions. Now then I must away, or all may yet go wrong."

Saying this he again muffled himself in his long cloak, pulled his hat closely over his face, and then stealthily quitted the merchant's new dwelling.

When the Cripple and the Bridge-shooter heard the strange tale, they were scarcely less surprised than the merchant had been. It was thought advisable not to tell Alyce of their hopes in case of failure, nor even to make Flora privy to their attempt ; and upon reflection, it was thought advisable not even to let Osborne know about it. The night proved clear, but very windy, the wind blowing strongly from the south. They were all upon the watch at their appointed stations soon after nine ; and here we will leave them for a time, and again visit Edward in his room.—He was just about retiring to rest, when he fancied he saw a flash of lightning against his bedroom window—soon after he saw another—and then a distant humming sound reached his ear ; at that time of year, and in such a night, it could not be lightning ; so he opened his casement, and looking out, saw the flaring of a great fire just beyond the Bridge in Southwark. He saw people hurrying across the Bridge from the City side towards the scene of conflagration, and a general cry of "fire" began to resound from every quarter. As quickly as he could, he hastened from his master's house and joined the excited throng.

It must be remembered that the merchant's house lay on the City end, so that Edward had to traverse nearly the whole length of the Bridge before he reached the Southwark Gate; here he found that the houses at that end were entirely enveloped in flames, and there was, that way, neither ingress nor egress possible. Knowing the combustible nature of the greater portion of the houses on the Bridge, Edward's first anxiety was to hurry back to his master's house, to collect their valuable account books, and remove them to some place of safety; although he did not much fear the fire reaching their dwelling, because he calculated that at the first opening on the Bridge, it would meet with a certain check. Yet just as Edward was entering the Golden Fleece, he heard the people say, that the flames had passed the first opening, and that they feared the whole Bridge would be destroyed. Not a moment was to be lost; he hurried from room to room, collecting every paper that he thought could be of value to his master; just as he was about to carry his load away, notwithstanding the danger, he could not resist the temptation of rushing up to his own room, and secure his writing-case, for in that were all the letters Anne had ever written to him; this delay, trifling as it really was, had nearly cost him his life, for by the same time he again descended, the roadway of the Bridge opposite his door had been so choked up with goods and chattels, that he found it impossible to pass out. It now struck him that the safer way to escape would be by the roofs of the houses; and to make the attempt, he once more ascended to his room, and hastened to the roof, when a new cause of alarm met his eye—the wind, at the beginning, had brought flakes of burning wood across the Bridge, and these had lodged upon, and ignited the northern end of the Bridge, which now was burning almost as fiercely as the Southwark end.

Edward, looking around, stood petrified at the

dreadful scene; he saw no one but himself upon the roofs, and had not the City end already caught fire, escape that way might have been possible. But what could he do?—was he to stand there immoveable until the flames surrounded him? At this moment of despair, a new hope flashed across his mind.—“Yes, yes!” he exclaimed, almost overcome with the sudden hope, “I know, I know the way! if I can gain the sterlings by the outlet beneath the Cardinal’s Hat, I may yet be saved.” He flew to the roof door—another moment, and the skylight on the roof was dashed in, and he found himself in the room beneath; in this there was a lamp burning, but looking round, he had nearly dropped to the earth in surprise, for on a couch he beheld the senseless body of the merchant’s child. He hastily raised her, and with his precious burden had descended but a short way, when further progress was stayed by the flames bursting through and rapidly devouring the stairs by which he had hoped to escape. He flew into a room, the door of which was open; this room looked out upon the bridge; he dashed the window out, and observing a beam some distance below, reaching across to the opposite side, which was not yet in flames, he with great difficulty, at last succeeded in reaching it safely with his precious charge; the footing was so insecure, that, laden as he was, he must have fallen, but for the friendly aid of a single line that had been stretched across to hang streamers from upon some late festive occasion.

When once he had gained the opposite dwelling, he lost not a moment, but hastened down; one hope still remaining—the outlet by the sterling. He passed as quickly as he could through the heap of boxes, bales, and other things that lay about; entered the now-deserted Cardinal’s Hat, he reached the lower room, when, to his surprise, he heard a groan, and then a cry for help; for a moment he deposited his treasure on a settle that stood by, and

went to the spot whence the cry had issued, when opening a door, he there found a female bound hand and foot—it was the Italian girl; in another moment she was free, and quickly comprehending their danger, she allowed not surprise to check her power to act. The trap in the floor was soon raised, and, oh joy beyond hope realized, the very boat beneath was that of the Bridge-shooter and the Cripple. The sleeping Anne, and then Mona, was lowered into the boat, Edward hanging, for an instant, by his hands on the edge of the opening, dropped into the bark, and all were safe.

As they rowed towards the shore, they looked back aghast at the fearful devastation going on upon the Bridge; at many parts the buildings were so undermined by the fire, that no boats dare go near to rescue those who, seeing no other chance of escape, flung themselves into the stream. More than one dwelling, almost entire, fell over into the river. If aught could at that moment of thankfulness have given a deeper joy to Edward's heart, it was, that, just after they had reached a spot beyond the danger from the burning timbers that were falling from the Bridge, they run foul of the merchant's barge, and they were soon all safely landed at the old Swan Stairs.

It would be impossible to express in words all the varied feelings which filled the breasts of the inmates of the merchant's mansion on that eventful night; we shall therefore pass over the scene in silence.

CHAPTER XXXII.

THE RECOVERY.

I neither may nor can
Longer the pleasure of mine hearte hide ;
If that thou vouchèsafe, what so betide,
Thy daughter will I take, ere that I wend,
As for my wife unto her livè end.

CHAUCER.

EDWARD OSBORNE'S anxiety on account of the state of stupor in which Anne continued all the next day after the fire, was so great, that as often as he could leave the superintendence of searching the ruins of the Golden Fleece, he had hastened to his master's new mansion ; at his third visit, he learnt with delight that returning consciousness had begun to appear ; but this pleasure was considerably modified when he learned that the merchant had gone to pay his dutiful respects to Lord Talbot, and to thank his lordship for the great interest he had shown upon the occasion of Anne's abduction.

All the young nobleman had told him, again presented itself to his memory, and he felt little doubt, but that Lord Talbot would at once disclose his intentions to the father. So anxious was he that his own secret should not be guessed at, that he determined at once to acquaint the merchant with his intention to leave England for ever ; for as he said to himself—"If I express my wishes *before* I am supposed to know of the great honour intended to his family, Master Hewet will not set down my sudden determination to any disappointed hopes on my part."

When the merchant did return, he was in high glee ; and upon hearing of the rapid progress his child had made towards recovery, during his absence, he exclaimed—"This I shall now for ever regard as the most fortunate day of my life, excepting one, my

Alyce dear, and that one was the day on which you consented to be mine!"

That the merchant should be thus happy did not appear unnatural, considering it was the first day after the finding his child. But Osborne, who delighted in tormenting himself, believed that there was another cause for the merchant's excessive joy, and that was, the proposal, which he doubted not, had already been made to Master Hewet, by the heir of Shrewsbury.

When Anne recovered her senses, the first person who met her dreaming gaze, was the Italian girl, Mona, watching by her couch, as she had seen her watching once before. All that had passed between them, came vividly to her recollection; nor could she for some time be convinced that she was once again beneath her father's roof, until Mona summoned the merchant and Alyce into the room.

It was no longer possible to doubt; she felt her arms were really around the necks of her dear parents—that their tears of joy, mingling with her own, were the true outpourings of loving hearts.

When Edward entered, all the dangers from which she had so miraculously escaped through his means, were related to the happy girl; and when she learnt that her life had a second time been saved by him, she cast upon him one look of intense gratitude, and for an instant, he felt as if he could have endured the agony of perishing in the flames, with less of anguish, than he now knew he must endure at parting from her for ever.

That very night, after all the other inmates of the place had retired to rest, he prayed of the merchant to grant him a few minutes of private converse.

So unusual a circumstance caused the merchant unfeigned surprise. "And what," said he, smiling, "is the mighty matter we have in hand, boy, that should keep us from our couches at so late an hour as this? To-morrow, to-morrow, I'll be sworn, will

be time enough, and there is a time for every thing you know."

"And that this is the time for what I have to say," replied Osborne, "I feel convinced; for what I wish to say, cannot be said too soon. You have always treated—nay, loved me, as a son, and I have ever honoured and loved you as a father—and you must not think me ungrateful in what I am going to say; it arises from no selfish feeling—it springs from no wayward love of change; but—but—master, I intend to leave you."

"Leave me!" exclaimed Hewet, leaning forward, and looking Edward full in the face.

The youth's eyes filled to the brim; and taking his master's hand, he sank his head upon it, as he repeated, firmly as his agitation would permit—"Yes, I intend to leave you."

"Did I not know your character too well," replied the merchant, "I should receive such words with doubt; but as I am sure you would not thus pain yourself or me, but for some potent reason, I will listen to all you wish to say. Tell me first, what has given birth to this thought? For I am sure that, of all men, young as he is, Edward Osborne is the last to wish to take such a step as that he now proposes, without some strong motive. You have called me father: speak openly as a son: tell me all, and I will then advise you truly as a father."

"Alas!" replied Edward, "it is because I cannot speak openly, that I have so long delayed to acquaint you with my resolve. Master, do not press me upon the question of my reason for wishing to quit your roof; but, believe me, it is no whim—no childish fancy. By what I have just said, you will perceive it is my wish to quit England, and it is in your power to let me do so, with bright prospects, as regards my future fortune lying before me. The management of the English factory at Antwerp, is the post I aspire to; your name and influence will be

sufficient to secure it for whom you will. Will you exert that influence for your apprentice, Edward Osborne, and thus, by opening a door, through which he may escape for ever from this isle, render him as happy as he can ever be, while he exists upon this earth?"

"This is a subject, from first to last," replied the merchant, "requiring more than a mere thought ere it be determined. But this far I will assure you at once—the idea of Antwerp is one that I will not oppose; there is a sound judgment shown in it, and if it be carried out, may one day lead to city fame, and city fortune. I will think upon what you have said, and in the morning we will again speak more fully upon all its varied bearings: but I see you are tired, and want to go to rest; so good night, and in the morning, as I have said before, we will speak more fully upon these matters."

Osborne spent half the night in devising means of avoiding Anne on the morrow, and for persuading his master to send her at once to the Cottage of the Heath.

The next morning the whole house was astir betimes, for the Cripple and his wife were that day to commence a long journey to take possession of one of Eoline's estates.

Notwithstanding the bustle in which the merchant was, Edward found the opportunity to express his wish, that no notice might be taken, at present, of their last night's conversation. The merchant too thought, that, until further progress had been made in the Antwerp business, strict silence upon the subject would be advisable; but he promised Edward that not one unnecessary moment should be wasted in bringing about the end desired. So far, Osborne's mind was relieved, but still more so, when the merchant, just as the other was about to speak to the same point, told him he had determined that Anne should at once depart for the Cottage.

"But come, astir, astir," said the merchant, "for we all have our work to do. Come, Willy-of-the-Bridge, mount, and away to your fortune, man; or mount and away *with* your fortune, I should say, for I believe Eoline, in your eyes, is the only thing you will deign to look upon as fortune. The Bridge-shooter will with you. Flora must remain with my spouse here."

"But who then," said Edward, "is to accompany your daughter to the Heath!"

"Who!" exclaimed Hewet, "why, who is there but you?"

"I!" ejaculated Osborne.

"You! yes, you," replied the merchant; "is there anything so wonderful in such an arrangement that you needs must stare your eyes out? It is not the first time you have protected Anne by some hundreds, is it?"

If Edward Osborne had puzzled his brain for a whole month to invent a more perplexing position for himself, he could not have conceived one half so embarrassing as that in which he found himself. Not an hour before he had been congratulating himself upon the almost certainty of being enabled to leave England without even the pain of bidding Anne farewell, when, all at once, he found himself, not only in her presence, but, as it were, actually shut up alone with her in a little box; for Anne, remaining still an invalid, all the windows of the cabin of the barge were closed, as well as the front doors.

It was quite astonishing to observe the altered conduct of each to the other, since each had discovered a new turn of feeling. Had they been placed in such a position but one little month before, and these two had been the happiest, the gayest of human beings; but now they sat motionless, speechless, and all because each loved the other, but dared not reveal that love, fearful, nay, certain, it would find no reflex in the other's heart.

They both remained silent for some time; till at length they commenced talking about the events connected with her disappearance, and Edward recounted all the anxieties caused by her loss, and all their endeavours to recover her. So much interest did his fair companion appear to feel in all he said, and so many kind looks did she cast upon the narrator, that Osborne felt inspired, and dilated so largely upon every point, that just as he had arrived at the moment of his placing her in her mother's longing arms, the barge stopped, and they found themselves at Putney.

As they walked towards the Heath, their minds, unknown to each other, turned upon exactly the like reflection, namely, how often had they before taken the self-same walk, but with what different feelings to those they experienced now.

When they reached the cottage, the first thing Anne did was to hasten to her old friend, the old man of the show. And it was a great relief to Osborne when Anne returned, to see the old man with her, and to learn that he would remain all the evening, and tell them all that had passed, and of the strange discovery he had made concerning his brother; for, although it was not yet made quite manifest, yet there was but little doubt remaining of the truth.

We must now take the reader to a very different scene.

It may be remembered that on one particular night the Cripple, who had taken refuge in the ruined dwelling over the Black Arch of the Clink, had seen four wretches bearing the murdered body of Ray the Clipper into one of the other houses near at hand; and it may also be remembered that Spikely had intimated that the body should be buried in the vault beneath the street; into this vault we will now lead the reader, and there Horton was sitting upon some damp straw; his legs tied together, and fastened to opposite wall in such a manner as to prevent him

drawing them up; his body was fastened by a chain that passed round his chest, just below his armpits, thus rendering it impossible, although his hands were at liberty, for him to reach his ancles to loosen the cords that bound his feet together.

Soon after he had left the court of justice, he had been waylaid by some of Spikely's ruffians, and had been brought to the miserable hole in which he was now confined.

The first system pursued by Spikely to torture the unfortunate wretch, was to introduce himself quietly into the vault while it was in total darkness, and then to work upon the other's fears, by speaking as though from the grave, for Horton was not aware of Spikely's escape from death.

A cold perspiration burst from every pore; he listened until his ears seemed pained by the awful silence; all was still—still and dark as the grave. Such horrid pictures did his fancy now portray, that they drove him to the brink of madness; he raved and screamed for help; for some time not a sound was heard; at last a ray of light came through a chink in the door, that seemed to him as a ray from heaven.

The door opened, and the gigantic ruffian, known before as Bludgeon Billy, stood in the way, holding a lamp—"What the devil ails you?" exclaimed the ruffian; "have you seen a ghost, that you shiver and shake so?"

"No," replied Horton, "but if ever a voice came from hell to torture a being of earth, that voice I have heard but now."

"What are you staring at?" said the other, as Horton riveted his eyes upon something lying close beside him; he answered not, but kept his gaze still rooted, as it were, upon the object of his fear; it was his own dagger, the one with which he knew he had slain Sir Filbut, but which he believed had been for years buried beneath the flood. Before he had power to speak, he heard a horrid laugh come from the next

vault, and in another moment Spikely stood before him.

Horton at once saw that he had been duped—that by some strange chance, unaccountable to him, Spikely had escaped the intended doom.

“Have you no kind word,” said Spikely, sneeringly, “no burst of joy to welcome an old friend, who owes you a heavy debt, and would have sought you round the globe, rather than not repay you? Do you not remember our last meeting? It made such an impression on me,” he said, pointing to a deep scar in his throat, “that while this remains, my obligation to good Harry Horton can never be forgotten.”

“You mean to murder me?” said Horton, trembling.

“That may depend upon yourself, or, perhaps, upon my humour. But first, there is one upon whom I have sworn to be avenged, and you must help me in the matter. You know to whom I allude. She baffles me still, although I know her hiding-place. You must draw her forth. Here are the necessary implements for writing; write what I shall dictate.

Horton, who never cared much about sacrificing any one, if, by doing so, he served himself, made no hesitation to write whatever Spikely desired.

The purport of the letter was to pray of Nan to meet Horton that night at the Cardinal’s Hat, and so artfully and temptingly worded, that Spikely chuckled again when it was finished, to think how certain he now was of his long-sought revenge.

Horton having done all that Spikely had commanded, most abjectly prayed for his life; but to all his prayers, his oaths of sorrow for the past, his promises of high reward—for he declared that he knew of a store of valuables that still remained secreted, belonging to the murdered knight—to all this Spikely would make no positive reply, but merely muttered—“We shall see, we shall see; but first let me fulfil my oath to Nan, and then your turn shall come. Farewell!”

Spikely turned upon his heels, and followed by

Bludgeon Billy, with the lamp, left Horton to his own miserable reflections. He gave himself up to despair, for he knew his enemy's unrelenting temper too well to hope for mercy. He made a desperate effort to loosen the chain that bound him, but the effort proved abortive; he felt about the wall behind him—the bricks were old and rotten—had he some tool, with which to work upon them, then it seemed yet possible that he might still release himself from the chain: his only hope now lay in the dagger—a strange hope for him.

The instant Horton had formed the notion of a way to escape, he felt about the ground in the direction in which he knew the dagger lay, and having after considerable difficulty secured it, he turned as well as he could towards the wall, and set to work. It was but a slow process, but still the progress he made held forth a hope, and gave him courage to persevere. After some hours of unceasing labour, the staple gave way; and, with the aid of the sharp edge of the dagger, the cords that bound his feet were soon cut asunder. He stood erect, and felt as if already free; but his greatest labour was still to come. He had guessed, from so plainly hearing every footfall that passed from the house into the street above, that the crown of the vault was close beneath the upper surface of the road. The only chance of escape lay in scraping away the mouldering mortar between the bricks of the arch, and thus form an aperture large enough for him to force his body through; even this he succeeded in accomplishing, but not until many a weary hour had come and gone.

Upon finding himself really free, his first thought was to seek Nan, and warn her of the plan laid for her destruction. So he hastened from the Clink, and we will now leave him on his road to Nan's abode.

Fate seemed to have armed herself against Edward Osborne at every turn. His plan was to have fled the enchantment of Anne's charms—fate placed him

closer within their spell ; he sought every opportunity to avoid her presence—fate invented new opportunities for continually placing her near him.

Next day, a messenger arrived with two letters from the merchant—one for Osborne, telling him not to expect his master until he saw him ; he might be at the Heath the next day, or he might not be there for a week. There was one short sentence, inserted by the express desire of Alyce, which troubled Edward, and that was, "That being so alarmed for the safety of her child, Osborne was not to lose sight of her for a single moment that it was possible for him to be near her." The other letter was to the old man, now addressed as Wilfred Mortley, desiring him to hasten to London as speedily as possible, thus taking away the only stay Edward felt he had to fall back upon.

Osborne proposed accompanying the old man as far as the Ferry ; but then the injunction "not to quit his precious charge for a single moment," came across his mind, so that if he went Anne must go too ; and so she did, and Edward then determined, however painful it might prove to him, to do his duty, and to act up to the strict letter of his instructions ; therefore not one instant of that day did he quit her presence ; and when the day was ended, he was astonished to find how quickly it had passed, and how much happier he had been than he could possibly have expected.

Their constant contiguity was causing dreadful havoc in both their hearts. Now when Anne placed her arm through his as they strolled about the Heath, it was done with that sweet dependence which tells of love ; and then would Edward press that arm much closer to his side than he was wont to do ; but so gradually, so imperceptibly had this mutual change grown upon them, that when on visiting the grave of poor Lillia, Anne wept, and rested her head on Edward's breast, and Edward kissed a tear from off

her cheek, neither he or she felt there was any thing extraordinary in that kindness of feeling.

Never was a more loving morning seen than that which followed the night we have just past over.

As they had not received any further news from London, both Anne and Edward determined to spend that morning in writing very long letters, one to the merchant, the other to her mother.

When they had ended their labour, they were about to prepare for a journey to the letter-carrier at the Ferry, when who should arrive but the old man. His face was so brimful of joy, that they felt sure that the news he brought was of a happy nature.

"Yes, yes, my children," said the old man, as they led him to the most comfortable of all the easy seats, "my news is indeed of a happy nature, and of a nature to make us all thrice happy, for it concerns my little Anne!"

"But of your own affairs, grandfather," said Anne, for she still always called him by that endearing name "what fortune has befallen you, good or bad?"

"Too good for my deserts," said the old man, "too good, far too good. There is no longer doubt of Algernon Mortley being my long-lost brother; and although all is not quite settled, 'tis next to certain, that the old beggar you purchased, your willing slave of the iron ring, will yet be a wealthy man."

"Oh, that is happy news indeed!" said Anne. "And how is my dear mother, and my dear father, and Flora, and all? And when are they to be here? and——"

"Stop, stop, child," ejaculated the old man, smiling; "I shall have forgotten your first question, before you reach your last, if you run on at that rate. First then, your mother and father are well and happy; and I have got such good news for my dear little Anne—for you must know that young Lord Talbot, the handsome Lord George, the heir to the earldom of Shrewsbury, has formally demanded your hand in marriage!"

Anne screamed ou'right, and would have fallen to

the ground, had not Edward sprang forward, and caught her in his arms.—“It has come at last!” he exclaimed, “the dreaded hour is come! Would to Heaven the earth could open at this instant, and swallow me up in death!”

“What means this folly?” said the old man. “Why, Edward, Edward, surely *you* too do not love her?”

“Love her!” exclaimed Edward, pressing the weeping girl closer and closer to his heart, “love is a word too weak, to paint the adoration, that fills my heart for her! Up to this moment, I have kept my secret closely sealed within my breast; I would not wrong the being I loved, by even disclosing to her my hopeless passion, fearing that pity for my sufferings might have moved her to forget herself. Surprise has wrung from me that which no mortal torture should have caused me to confess! ’Tis useless now to deny my love; but I will prove its proud sincerity! This moment shall see me fly from all that could render life endurable! Farewell, dear, dear, *dear* Anne, farewell!”

“Edward, Edward,” Anne exclaimed, clinging to him, “do not leave me thus! you know not—cannot know how dearly——”

“Hush, child,” said the old man, gently placing himself between them, as he loosened her arms from Edward’s neck, and do you, Edward, go to your room—I will soon follow, and then my advice, though perhaps not worthy the taking, shall be at least sincere.”

Edward did not speak; but taking the old man’s hand between both of his, pressed it fervently, and burst from the apartment.

When he was gone, the old man approached Anne, and seating himself by her side, took her hand kindly in his own.—“Child,” he said, why this strong, this sudden burst of anguish? Lord Talbot is handsome, talented, and great, and in my eyes he has no fault.”

"In mine," said Anne, "he has all faults in one—his wish to wed me."

"I never knew a maiden yet," replied the old man, 'who loathed a suitor, were he ne'er so worthless, if you love another, and tell me, then, child, and tell me with all the candour your used to speak your mind in our olden times.

"I do," said Anne, looking the old man full in the face, "Oh, grandfather," she continued, "I knew not until I thought we were to part, how dearly I love Edward. Nor did I know his love for me till now. He knows not yet of mine. I want not to wed with any. All I would pray is, that I may not be forced to give my hand to one, while my heart is given to another."

The old man promised to see her father again, and "little doubted," he said, "that much as he knew the merchant had set his heart upon the aggrandizement of his child, he might yet persuade him to find some means to avoid the promised union." Having relieved her mind to a degree upon this point, the old man ascended to Osborne's room.

We will not relate all the arguments the old man used to convince Edward how foolish he had been in giving way to a passion so hopeless; but we cannot resist stating that he did this in a way that must appear to our readers the very opposite course to that which he ought to have pursued, for notwithstanding the caution given him by Anne, he told Osborne all that had passed between them, and of his promise to Anne, of again seeing the merchant, and said—"And now, boy, as this will probably be the last evening you will ever pass with poor Anne, I need not tell you to be kind to her, and above all things, I charge you, drop not a hint that I have disclosed to you her secret."

Not long after this, the old man might be seen trudging along on his promised journey to London. How far Osborne obeyed the old man's injunctions we know not; nor do we know whether Edward told

Anne, or Anne told Edward of her affection for him ; nor indeed do we know, or if we do, we will not tell, what sighs and tears—what hopes and fears were mutually exchanged ; but this we do know, and this we may tell, that after passing through many a year of a long life, Edward always declared that that night was the most miserably happy of his whole existence.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

THE DEATH-STRUGGLE.

And by the throate-bole he caught Alein ;
And he him hent dispiteously again,
And on the nose he smote him with his fist ;
Down ran the bloody stream upon his breast.

CHAUCER.

WHEN Horton reached Nan's abode it was broad day ; and although it was only a few hours since he had been compelled to write to her, he arrived too late to warn her. He here learnt, that after the night had somewhat advanced, a lad had brought a letter "from Master Horton to Widow Spikely ;" as he said, and that she had immediately quitted the place with the lad.

"Then she is lost," said Horton to himself, as he turned away ; "I must fly this land, for Spikely will never rest again till I am hunted down."

We will now look into the Cardinal's Hat, and see what strange things were happening there.

"I think we shall nab her now," said Spikely to Brassinjaw, as he heard some one at the top of the stairs, whistling a well-known air.

"She's caught ! by Heavens, she's caught !" exclaimed Spikely, starting up and hurrying towards

the sliding panel, which he opened, and passed through.

The panel closed just as the door opened, and Nan entered the room.

"'Tis late at night to see a lady," said Brassinjaw, rising with pretended politeness; "what would you, worthy dame?"

"I am summoned here," replied Nan, "by one who calls himself Harry Horton—is he here?"

"He who expects you is already here," said Brassinjaw; "he is in the next apartment—you can pass through here;" and he pushed aside the panel as he spoke.

The little lamp that Spikely had with him sent forth scarcely any light at all. Nan stopped at the opening for an instant, but the moment she had passed, the panel was violently shut from the inner side. Nan uttered a loud shriek, and a violent struggle was heard, succeeded by the sound as of some one suffering in strangulation.—"By Heavens," exclaimed Brassinjaw, "he'll kill her; and I shall be implicated in the murder. I must try my strength 'gainst his—he shall not murder her!" and he flew to the panel, and began to try and burst it in, when it suddenly flew aside, and Spikely was in the opening. Brassinjaw instinctively drew out his knife—"You've killed her!" he exclaimed.

"'Tis a lie!" said the other, closing the panel behind him; "I have but given her a blow, not half so hard as those she was used to once: 'twill silence her for a time—and while she's quiet, I'll have a word or two with you, mayhap a blow, unless you at once give me the clear half of the five hundred pounds you would have sold me for. What, fool! I have surprised you, have I? Did you think to reach the merchant's unwatched by me? but for the chance of the fire on the Bridge, you had learnt ere this the sort of man you had to deal with. Your money I know you keep in yonder cupboard—give me the key!"

"Neither key, nor money will you have from me,"

replied Brassinjaw ; " nor shall you have that woman's life, either if I can prevent it."

" Hell-dog !" exclaimed Spikely, as with his uplifted knife he sprang upon Brassinjaw ; there was no retreating for either ; the struggle was for life or death ; like two thorough-bred bull-dogs, they made no barking in their fight, they each lost the hold of their knives at the same moment, and their hands were in an instant upon each other's throat ; they reeled, and reeled again ; and just as they were falling, the floor passed away from beneath their feet, and they sank into the roaring waters that thundered beneath the Bridge ; even this shock failed to make either let go his hold. Over and over they tumbled as they went dashing down the cataract, and still grasping each other's throats they sunk beneath the waters and were drowned.

Horton, who was now, more than ever, in fear of Spikely, and believing he should be safer at some distance from London until he had matured his plans, strolled towards the City, intending to take the passage-boat, that ran regularly at that time, to Gravesend. As he approached Billingsgate, he saw a crowd close to the water's edge around two bodies that had just been discovered half buried in the mud ; the throats of both firmly compressed in each other's hands.

It was a considerable relief to Horton to discover that Spikely was dead ; and Brassinjaw having been recognised by the crowd, was carried to the Cardinal's Hat, on opening which, and going into one of the lower rooms, a sight met their eyes no less appalling than that which they had just witnessed, for there they discovered the lifeless body of Nan hanging to the rope that came down from the roof of the closet. In her despair, when she had somewhat recovered from the ill-usage of her husband, she had mounted on a stool, had tied the rope around her neck, then kicking away the stool, which was found upset close by her, her

weight, in falling, had withdrawn the bolts, and thus unconsciously she had sent the two vile miserable wretches to their dread account. The body was immediately cut down, but it was found to have been dead for many hours. Thus ended three of the most determined wretches of our eventful tale.

We must now, once again, convey our readers to the Cottage on the Heath.

It was scarcely mid-day, on the third day since the old man left for London, that he presented himself at the Cottage. As he approached the sitting-room, the door of which was ajar, he heard the voice of Osborne reading aloud; the words were from the Bible. He opened the door gently, and there beheld a sight that, considering the exhortations he had given to Edward at their parting, was one that clearly proved his commands had not been *quite* strictly attended to, for there sat Edward and Anne close together, her one hand resting affectionately upon his shoulder, the other hand closely locked in his own. They were both intently perusing the Holy Book, but Osborne was reading aloud.

He stood quietly contemplating the lovers, until the reading ceased. He then gave a slight *ahem!* which caused Edward and Anne to start round. Poor Anne felt her situation acutely, and so did what was, under the embarrassing circumstances, perhaps the wisest thing she could do—namely, ran, and throwing her arms round his neck, hid her blushes in his bosom. Osborne felt confused too—not alone because the old man had come upon them so unexpectedly, but because he scarcely knew how to commence what he had determined to say, and which he had said over and over again to himself admirably when alone; but now he could not conjure up a single word.

“Edward,” said the old man, shaking his head at Osborne, while he still held the lovely Anne close to his heart, “is this well? Is this the way in which you ever keep your promises?”

"I made no promises," replied Osborne; "I would not promise; and if we have done wrong in laying open to each other our hopes, you alone should bear the blame; for did you not divulge to me the love Anne bore me?"

"Be not angry with Edward, dear grandfather," said Anne, looking up in the old man's face imploringly. "If any one be to blame, 'tis I—indeed it is."

"Of course it is," said the old man, slightly smiling; "I never yet found maid who loved, but ever took all blame upon herself. But I want not to find fault; I want to find out the reason for this sudden change. Speak, Edward, tell me how this has come to pass?"

"How can you ask?" replied Osborne. "It is self-evident—I betrayed myself, in telling my love for her; you betrayed her, in telling her love for me; and we have resolved never to wed but with each other; we have plighted our troth; we have broken this ring together;" and, saying this, he enfolded the willing girl in his arms.

"Oh, dear! oh, dear! oh, dear!" said the old man, beating his hands against the sides of his own head; "this comes of leaving them—this all comes of leaving them together—how will it end,—how *will* it end?"

"Well, depend on it, if you will befriend us," said Edward.

"I befriend you—I! how can I do so, knowing as I do the merchant's fixed resolve to marry Anne to the Lord Talbot; for, as he told me, 'he should then be sure he had not been duped by some artful beggar, who would play the lover to get his gold.' I dare say I have done wrong," said the old man, "but I thought to serve you both; so I told the merchant Edward's love for you."

"And what said he?" enquired Edward, eagerly.

"Said!" replied the other, "he burst into a laugh, and then exclaimed, 'Love her! pooh, pooh! he loves her money-bags. None shall wed with Anne, but he who loves her, and can put that love beyond a doubt by

bringing more to her than she to him.' I then thought I might do something by working upon his fears, so hinted gently, that if he took not greater care, I verily believed that you would wed without his consent at all."

"And to that, how did he reply?" exclaimed Osborne, more anxiously than before.

"By another laugh," replied the old man; "and then he added, 'Prove him, old man! place him at the altar with my girl, and fifty priests all willing to unite them—then let but Edward know he took her without my consent, and he'd refuse her at the altar's foot; for he would be sure that instead of wedding with rich Hewet's daughter, he had married with a beggar.'"

"Did he say that?" exclaimed Edward, drawing himself up proudly; "but thank Heaven he did, for now I have the opportunity to prove the real sincerity of my love. All I wish is to show that I love her for herself alone."

"And I," said Anne, "since he is willing to receive a beggar's hand, would willingly be a beggar to become his wife."

"You are mad, you are both stark staring mad, to talk thus!" ejaculated the old man.

"No, grandfather, no," said Anne; "and if you would not see us really mad, devise some plan to aid us."

"What plan can be better than the one I formed, dear Anne?" said Osborne.

"And what mighty plan was that?" enquired the old man.

"To tempt the pastor of the ruined chapel," said Edward, "to unite us privily; I am willing then to keep our marriage secret, and knowing she is mine, to say farewell in the ruined aisle—to accept the appointment in a foreign land—to labour night and day to achieve an independence, and then, and not till then, would I return to claim my heart's treasure. I have already, more than once, prayed of Anne to agree to

this; I have spoken to the pastor, but, alas! he hesitates. You might do much with him; you might persuade him—tempt him with all I have of earthly value.”

“And would you really,” interrupted the old man, addressing Anne, be willing to forego all your bright prospects? But wait until to-morrow, your father will then be here, and with him, I believe, the young Lord Talbot. But now listen to me; I will promise *nothing*; I will, to ease your minds, see the pastor; but it must be on one condition—that whatever be my decision, when I return, you will then abide by it.”

Poor Osborne, and Anne too, had so wrought up their feelings, that they scarcely knew what they did or said; but fancying there was a sound of hope in the old man’s words, they eagerly assented, and the old man immediately left the cottage.

He had not been gone long, before they were surprised at hearing the voice of Flora, singing gaily along the garden. When she entered the parlour, she started at seeing Anne weeping bitterly, and reclining upon Edward’s shoulder, his arm around her waist.

“Halloo!” said Flora. “Master Edward, do you know what you are doing? Oh, fie! oh, fie!”

“This is no moment for jesting, Flora,” said Osborne. “But how is it you are here? Are you alone?”

“Alone!” she replied, “to be sure I am. But what does all this crying and sobbing mean? do one of you speak. Here have I been sent on with a whole boat-load of things; for I suppose you know that the merchant and our good dame, and Willy-of-the-Bridge, and Eoline, and somebody Mistress Anne will be *delighted* to see, are coming here to-morrow, and that somebody is young Lord Talbot; and I understand that we are to have a wedding. Why, good gracious, Mistress Anne, you look as if you were fainting—what is the matter?”

Osborne who believed that Flora sincerely loved

her young mistress, told her all that had passed, even to the present mission of the old man.

"And I'm glad of it," said Flora, "and I hope to heaven that nothing will happen to prevent so proper a scheme being carried out. I'll be after him," she continued, "and I'll bring back some good news, depend upon it; and if the pastor refuses to marry you, I'll do it myself: so cheer up till I come back." Flora waited not for a reply, but hurried from the Cottage.

At least an hour had elapsed since the old man's departure, when suddenly he entered the room. He was greatly agitated.

"Why have you drawn me into this terrible perplexity?" he said, "I have done wrong, I know I have done wrong, but ask me no questions;—the pastor has consented."

"Bless him! bless him!" exclaimed Anne, as she flung herself upon the old man's neck; "and bless you, dear grandfather, for you alone have worked this miracle."

"Now," said the old man, "your own fates are in your own hands; once more I pray of you—I beseech of you to reflect, while yet there is time. In a wordly point of view, this marriage will bring ruin on you both; remember, Edward, the moment you are married you are to leave the country, and never to divulge this secret union, until you can come and claim your bride with ample independence."

"I know all," said Edward; "and if but Anne consent to forego all for me, can you believe that I would hesitate one moment in foregoing all for her?"

"Well then," sighed the old man, "fate must work its way. Retire, children, to your separate rooms, and in holy meditation prepare your minds for the step you are about to take; in one hour all will be prepared."

The lovers did as the old man desired. What passed in the minds of Osborne and Anne, when left to cool reflection, it would be difficult to describe. Whatever reflections came of a painful nature, they

were easily dispelled by calling up the vision of the one beloved object. By the time the hour had elapsed, they both met the old man with countenances thoughtful, it is true, but smiling; and they could not help feeling cheered by seeing a slight smile also upon the old man's face.

"Come," he said, "my children, I will not check the happiness that your hearts might feel, upon this most eventful day of your lives, by seeming sad; come then, my children, come to the ruined chapel."

In another minute and they were on their road to happiness or misery for life.

They had not been gone but scarcely a short half-hour, when along the road leading from London, a rather extensive cavalcade might be seen approaching which, had the lovers beheld, would have cast them into hopeless despair. It was the merchant and his party, all but Lord Talbot! The effect this unlooked for arrival had upon the fates of our hero and heroine, we must leave to a future chapter to disclose:

CHAPTER XXXIV.

THE MARRIAGE.

My lady and my love, and wife so dear,
I put me in your wise governance;
Chooseth yourself which may be most pleasure
And most honour to you and me also;
I do no force the whether of the two,
For as you liketh it sufficeth me.

CHAUCER.

LET us now briefly tell the subsequent proceedings and fate of Horton.

When he saw that his two enemies were dead, there still remained a fear that Spikely had denounced him

as the murderer of Sir Filbut; and when he learned that such really was the case, he determined to leave England and escape across the Border. The first thing he had to do was to secure a horse for the journey, and he went to the market in Smithfield for the purpose of making a purchase. Selecting one that seemed within the compass of his means, he addressed the owner of a vicious-looking animal:—

"You seem to have an awkward customer there, friend," said he, "he has, evidently, more of the devil than the dove about him."

"Hang me," said the man, "if I don't think he is the devil himself."

"There are a good many good points about him," observed Horton, "and when young, must have been a sightly beast; would you sell him?"

"Sell him," exclaimed the man, "that I would, if I could find a fool great enough to buy; but he's too well known in Smithfield to find a customer here! He won't work but when he likes, and won't let any body mount him."

"Well," said Horton, "I have never seen a horse that could conquer me yet; put on a saddle, and let me try him."

"You'll take all the blame to yourself, then," said the man, as he saddled the horse; to which operation the animal very quietly submitted; "but I don't mind betting you a silver groat that you don't get on at all; and another silver groat that if you do you'll be off again before you can say Billy-the-bird-catcher."

"Done," said Horton. His first care was to examine the girths, the stirrup leathers, and the bridle; and having satisfied himself of their soundness, he cleverly vaulted into the saddle.

For a moment the animal, taken by surprise, was quiet, when suddenly he began to plunge, and rear, and kick violently; but was unable to throw his rider. "There goes your groats," said Horton, triumphantly, "You see I have conquered him;" but scarcely were

the words uttered, ere the vicious brute, taking the bit in his teeth, dashed off; Horton in vain tried to pull him in; the horse continued his mad career; and when Horton was beginning to hope that it must soon give in, the reins broke, and he was pitched from the saddle, and his foot being caught in the stirrup, he was dragged along the ground, till the horse, from sheer exhaustion fell, and beside it lay Horton's lifeless body—a shapeless mass of torn and bloody flesh.

A very different scene was taking place in the ruins of the old chapel. When our hero and heroine descended into the old crypt, they found the assistant there, but the pastor was absent. A single lamp hung from the roof, which lighted but a very scanty space round; and many parts were in total darkness. They seated themselves on an old stone seat, and then a long deathlike silence ensued.

After a time, the old man rose, and went to the assistant, who was attentively reading from an iron-bound massive Bible, and whispered something in his ear; the man immediately quitted his seat, and retired, and then another lengthened silence ensued.

Not long after the good pastor arrived, and with him Flora and several of his flock, principally country labourers, and a few substantial-looking farmers. The only persons that came within the range of the lamp's feeble rays, were the pastor, the assistant, the kneeling lovers, Flora, who stood on one side, and the old man who rested against a tomb in the rear. Osborne and the lovely Anne never raised their eyes for a moment from the earth; so strange, so unaccountable seemed their positions. The only time when Osborne for a moment regained his confidence, and his voice no longer trembled, was as he uttered the vow to love and cherish her he was then making his own for ever. It had, of course, been settled that the old man was to act as the father to give away the bride; and when the moment had arrived to place the hand of Anne in that of Edward's, it was a moment of real pain to Anne,

for the thought flew through her heart, of "why was not her own father there to perform the act." She felt the hand that took hers tremble as violently as her own; but when hers was placed in that of Osborne, the pressure of true affection acted like a spell, to banish all thoughts but one, and that thought was—he is my husband!

The moment the ceremony was finished, the congregation hurried away to their various avocations; but the pastor kept the young pair some time longer, listening to an exhortation and holy lecture for their governance in their future altered state of being.

As they returned to the cottage, Flora would not allow them to be sad, at least she endeavoured to prevent them, by continually addressing Anne as "Dame Osborne," and said, "she was perfectly astonished to see how much older she looked since she had become a married woman."

When they reached the cottage and entered the sitting-room, Osborne and Anne were surprised to find the merchant, Alyce, and the whole party there.

"Why, Edward," said the merchant, "you look as deadly pale as though you had just committed murder, or matrimony; but I bring you good news, boy—take that," saying which, he placed a sealed packet in Edward's hand; "there are your credentials; I have settled everything, I am sure, to your satisfaction. But you must start this very night. There now, no thanks; and while the repast is being prepared—do you and Anne take a stroll, and bid each other good bye, for your stay abroad will perhaps be a lengthy one."

These few words seemed to remove a mountain off Edward's breast: he would still have a few moments alone with Anne, when they could arrange how they might hear from each other. When they were alone together, they could no longer blind themselves to the misery of their position. At one moment Anne would have braved all, rather than endure the pain of parting;

ing; but the next she shuddered at the thought of the storm, that would surely follow such a revelation.

Over all the vows, the sighs, the prayers, the promises, the oaths they mutually breathed from their inmost hearts, we must draw a veil; such secrets are too sacred to be lightly dealt with.

During the whole of the repast, the merchant would keep joking, and was more than usually merry. He laughing, told the company, that before Osborne should return from abroad, he hoped to have a right worthy son-in-law—one that he might be proud of—"So, Edward, boy, look at your sister well, for you will never again see her unmarried."

The Cripple too was wondrous jocular; but he could now afford to be right merry, for he was rich in all that could bring happiness to man; and the Bridge-shooter with Flora were as wild and foolish as playful kittens.

When the moment for Edward's departure arrived, Anne could no longer restrain her tears; but the merchant only laughed at her for her weakness, and told her that she ought to be delighted, for her brother was entering upon the road to fortune and to happiness. Edward could not trust himself to say "farewell!" to any one; but biting his lips, as if he thought that would keep down his swelling heart, he seized his cap, his hand was on the fastening of the door—he cast one look back upon Anne, and was about to rush forth, when he was called back by the merchant.

"Why, boy," exclaimed the merchant, "you have forgotten the most important thing of all!"

Osborne turned, and there he saw the sealed packet "I had indeed," he said; and then once more approached the door.

"Well," again exclaimed the merchant, "you will forget your head next, I imagine. Do you think you can travel half round the world without money? There is a well-stocked purse—take it, and what more

you require, when in a foreign land, my agents will supply."

Edward felt almost as much pain at finding how willingly all but one could see him depart, as he did at parting with all he now wished to live for; but he was determined to suppress his feelings until he might give vent to them in secret. Once more his hand was on the door, and once more, as if to torture him still further, the merchant exclaimed—"Why, the boy will drive one mad with his forgetfulness; the most particular thing of all he has again forgotten?"

"What have I now forgotten, master?" said Edward, in an imploring tone; "what have I still forgotten?"

"What have you still forgotten?" replied the merchant, imitating Edward's tone of voice, "why, that which few men are ever allowed to forget, you have forgotten—your wife!"

"In Heaven's name what mean you?" exclaimed Edward Osborne, his eyes staring with astonishment.

Anne clung trembling to her mother, and became ashy pale.

"What mean I?" replied the merchant. "Master Hewet is one of those who generally means exactly what he says. Come hither, and if you can do so, deny what I have said. Have you, or have you not a wife?"

"I have," replied Edward.

"And that wife was my child," said Hewet. "Now, mark me, Edward; what you have done, you have done, you have done not blindly; you knew my thoughts upon that subject, as clearly as I did myself; I have often and often told you, that were she ever to wed without my full knowledge and consent, that from that hour she was no longer a child of mine." Again Anne clung more closely to her mother. "Do you remember hearing me utter that determination?"

"I do," replied Osborne, who, now all hope seemed past, felt a powerful return of his self-possession; "I do remember it, for you feared, you said, that your fortune, not your daughter's love, would be the aim of

him who wedded her. It was that very knowledge which first inspired me with hope, for I felt——”

“How little I care for what you felt,” observed the merchant, “you will discover when you read the contents of the packet you now hold. Break the seals at once, for it were better that you know the worst at once.”

Osborne with trembling hands tore open the packet, and upon reading but a single line, became more bewildered than ever.

“Good Heavens!” he exclaimed, turning his imploring gaze upon his master, “speak to me, and tell me, am I in a dream, or is all that I see and hear, and feel, reality?”

“If the boy is too great a dunce,” observed Hewet, “to read such a plain document as that, do you, Willy-of-the-Bridge, read it for him.”

The Cripple took the parchment, when the whole mystery was made clear; it was a deed of partnership between William Hewet and Edward Osborne, in every way completed but the signatures.

“And have I forfeited all this goodness,” exclaimed Osborne, “by my mistaken hope of proving my disinterested love for her?”

“You would have done so,” replied the merchant, “had you married her without my knowledge and consent; but know, to your astonishment, that the hand which placed her hand in yours, was that of her father. You were both too deeply absorbed to perceive, that instead of our old friend there approaching the altar, that it was her father who took his place. It was I, her father, who willingly gave her to you; it is I, her father, who now open my arms to receive a son!”

Never were such happy faces seen, as those that now smiled upon one another. In the evening the ceremony of signing the deed of partnership took place, and every one present witnessed it. Even the sweet and gentle Eoline made a mark upon the deed,

and then kissing the newly-made bride, placed upon her neck a golden chain, to which was attached a splendid diamond ornament.

In a few days, Osborne was on his way to a foreign shore, but not as he so lately dreaded he should be, for now he was sailing as a princely merchant, in one of their own ships, and with him his adored wife and Flora. They were to be away for a long time; and while they are on their tour, we will pause awhile, ere we say farewell to our gentle readers.

It is perhaps in life, as it generally is in books, that when once marriage takes place, the *romance* is at an end; but with regard to Osborne and Anne, in losing the romance of love, they found its reality.

CHAPTER XXXV.

CONCLUSION.

The fruit of every tale is for to say
They eat, and drink, and dance, and sing, and play.
CHAUCER.

IN the time of Edward the Sixth, there stood an old house at the end of Chancery Lane, and it was from this house Dame Spikely was conducted by Horton, when she went to give evidence in the Law Court of Westminster. It was soon destined, however, to become the home of a very different character, for it had lately been purchased by Master Hewet for the purpose of carrying out one of his long-premeditated plans. But of that anon.

So very long had Edward, with Anne and Flora, been abroad, that ere they returned to Old England again, wonderful changes had taken place. Old London Bridge had been restored to its former magnificence, and the Golden Fleece was now one of the most superb houses upon it; but perhaps the greatest

change of all, was to hear the Bridge-shooter's altered tone of voice, as he proudly addressed his master as—"My lord, and Alyce as my lady." By this it may be guessed, that Master Hewet was now LORD MAYOR OF LONDON; and William elevated to the dignity of master of the Lord Mayor's barge. Never before had coat and badge been worn with greater pride, than it was by the Bridge-shooter, when he attended his master upon state occasions. Perhaps the proudest day of his whole barge-man's life, which, by-the-by only lasted a year, was when he attended the Lord Mayor and Lady Mayoress as far as Greenwich, to receive on board their splendid boat the Lord Mayor's daughter, with her husband, and his own dear Flora, when they returned from the continent.

After the first burst of joy had subsided, the merchant began to inform Osborne of the plans he had been arranging for their future modes of life. "Yes," he said, "the house on the Bridge has been rebuilt, and furnished with all the luxuries that the four quarters of the globe can bestow, and there you and Anne will live; for upon you will now devolve all the profits of our trade. I and Alyce shall remain in the house we now inhabit, and William is to——"

Here the merchant was interrupted by Flora entering the saloon of the barge, in a violent fit of laughter. She was followed by William, who was evidently annoyed about something; but the more he appeared so, the more did Flora laugh, and insisted upon telling them the cause.

"Now, Flora, it's too bad—it is upon my life!" said William. "But never mind, *you* are master now, but *I* shall be after Christmas."

This made Flora laugh still louder.

"But what can have made the girl so mad?" enquired Alyce.

"Why, when I found," said Flora, "that the merchant—I mean his *lordship*—had determined that

marry William I must, why, I consented ; and as I wished him not to look quite so silly as some people do when they are being married, by not knowing what they are to say or do, I made him begin to practice. 'Now, William,' said I, 'you will have to say—I William so and so——'

"By-the-by," interrupted Edward, "it never struck me before ; but I really believe that not one person here ever heard his other name ; for he has always been called either Billy, or William, or the Bridge-shooter. So tell us, William, what is your name ?"

At this, William blushed up to his eyes, and Flora began again to laugh.

"I asked him the same question ; and what do you think was his reply ? He said—'he didn't know his own name, but he'd go and ask his mother.'"

This caused a general laugh, at the Bridge-shooter's expense. They were now very near the Bridge ; so he seized upon this circumstance as an excuse for leaving them in their mirth. He now took the guidance of the boat into his own hands. When they were almost close upon the Bridge, he gave a signal. Every oar was in an instant shipped, and in another moment the barge shot gallantly down the fall. The ours, like a flash of light, once again were in the flood ; and in five minutes more they had all landed at Old Swan Stairs.

It had been settled that William and Flora should be married on the day before Christmas-day, so that a right merry wedding it was sure to be ; for the Christmas merrymakings in the olden time may be said to have been quite serious affairs. The Christmas holidays had already commenced, and this being the case, mirth and jollity reigned from one end of the kingdom to the other.

When the Bridge-shooter returned from having asked his mother what his name was, he told Flora, that there never was a name so cut out for a waterman as his, for it was Flood—"And uncommon well it looks over the door."

"Over what door?" inquired Flora.

"What door!" replied William; "why, over our own door, to be sure, in front of *our* house, at the end of Chancery Lane."

"Why, William," said Flora, "you must be mad to talk this nonsense!"

"If it is nonsense, it's uncommon pleasant nonsense; and you only come and see it," said the Bridge-shooter; and as he would take no denial, Flora and he strolled towards Chancery Lane.

When they arrived there, it was all quite true; for there she saw, on a board over the door, "William Flood, Clothseller."

William now made her heart jump for joy, for he told her, that the merchant had given that house to his wife, and his wife was going to give it to Flora, as a wedding-present; and that the merchant was stocking the place with all sorts of clothier's goods, and was going to set William up as a retail dealer.

When the morrow did come, the bells were set ringing merrily. The expected marriage of the Bridge-shooter had made a great noise in and about the neighbourhood of Philpot Lane, and also amongst the inhabitants on Old London Bridge; so that, when he and Flora went to the church, they were attended by an enormous crowd of persons, all declaring they were intimate friends of the bride or bridegroom.

Luckily, the mansion of the merchant Hewet was an immense building, and the great hall in which the Christmas-eve revelries were to take place, was of a prodigious size. It was profusely decorated with ivy and holly, and lighted by nearly a thousand tapers. A large gallery was crowded with musicians, who filled the air with sweetest, and merriest strains.

The moment William and his pretty bride entered beneath the roof, they were seized by his bargeman, and straightway placed, side by side, upon the Yule-log, which had been kept near the door on purpose.

Then a shout was raised, both within and without the house. Some of the bargemen acted the part of horses, to drag the Yule-log along, while the rest marched at the side, as a guard of honour.

In this way did worthy Master William Flood and his smiling dame enter the presence of the Lord Mayor of London and his beloved Alyce. Behind them stood Edward and Anne; and by Hewet's side sat the old man of the show.

The merriment increased prodigiously, and a general dance took place. Even the merchant and his Alyce were not permitted to decline joining in this part of the delights of a Christmas-eve. Nor did Edward and Anne refuse; but the happiest and merriest couple there, was Flora and her newly-made husband.

All seemed joy around, so while they are thus happily engaged we will let fall the curtain upon
OLD LONDON BRIDGE.

THE END



Maud Muller

"It Might Have Been."

Her Joy was Duty
And Love was Law.

For one of the brightest poetic gems. P.T.O.

MAUD MULLER.

MAUD MULLER, on a summer's day, raked the meadow sweet with hay.
 Beneath her torn hat glowed the wealth of simple beauty and rustic health.
 Singing, she wrought, and her merry glee the mock-bird echoed from his tree.
 But when she glanced to the far-off town, white from its hill slope looking down,
 The sweet song died, and a vague unrest and a nameless longing filled her breast,—
 A wish, that she hardly dare to own, for something better than she had known.
 The Judge rode slowly down the lane, smoothing his horse's chestnut mane.
 He drew his bridle in the shade of the apple-trees to greet the maid,
 And asked a draught from the spring that flowed through the meadow across the road.
 She stooped where the cool spring bubbled up, and filled for him her small tin cup,
 And blushed as she gave it, looking down on her feet so bare, and her tattered gown.
 "Thanks!" said the Judge; "a sweeter draught from a fairer hand was never quaffed."
 He spoke of the grass and flowers and trees, of the singing birds and the humming bees;
 Then talked of the hay, and wondered whether the cloud in the west would bring foul
 And Maud forgot her brier-torn gown, and her graceful ankles bare and brown [weather
 And listened, while a pleased surprise looked from her long-lashed hazel eyes.
 At last, like one who for delay seeks a vain excuse, he rode away.
 Maud Muller looked and sighed: "Ah me! That I the Judge's bride might be!
 "He would dress me up in silks so fine, and praise and toast me at his wine.
 "My father should wear a broadcloth coat; my brother should sail a painted boat.
 "I'd dress my mother so grand and gay, and the baby should have a new toy each day.
 "And I'd feed the hungry and clothe the poor, and all should bless me who left our door."
 The Judge looked back as he climbed the hill, and saw Maud Muller standing still.
 "A form more fair, a face more sweet, ne'er hath it been my lot to meet.
 "And her modest answer and graceful air show her wise and good as she is fair.
 "Would she were mine, and I to-day, like her, a harvester of hay;
 "No doubtful balance of rights and wrongs, nor weary lawyers with endless tongues,
 "But low of cattle and song of birds, and health and quiet and loving words."
 But he thought of his sisters proud and cold, and his mother vain of her rank and gold.
 So, closing his heart the Judge rode on and Maud was left in the field alone.
 But the lawyers smiled that afternoon, when he hummed in Court an old love tune;
 And the young girl mused besides the well till the rain on the unraked clover fell.
 He wedded a wife of richest dower, who lived for fashion, as he for power.
 Yet oft, in his marble hearth's bright glow, he watched a picture come and go;
 And sweet Maud Muller's hazel eyes looked out in their innocent surprise.
 Oft, when the wine in his glass was red, he longed for the wayside well instead;
 And closed his eyes, on his garlished rooms to dream of meadows and clover-blossoms.
 And the proud man sighed, with a secret pain, "Ah, that I was free again!
 "Free as when I rode that day, where the barefoot maiden raked her hay."
 She wedded a man unlearned and poor, and many children played round her door.
 But care and sorrow, and childbirth pain, left their traces on heart and brain.
 And oft, when the summer sun shone hot on the new-mown hay in the meadow lot,
 And she heard the little spring brook fall over the road side, through the wall,
 In the shade of the apple-tree again she saw a rider draw his rein.
 And, gazing down with timid grace, she felt his pleased eyes read her face.
 Sometimes her narrow kitchen walls stretched away into stately halls;
 The weary wheel to a spinnet turned, the tallow candle an astral burned,
 And for him who sat by the chimney lug, dozing and grumbling o'er pipe and mug,
 A manly form at her side she saw, and joy was duty and love was law.
 Then she took up her burden of life again, saying only, "It might have been."
 Alas for maiden, alas for Judge, for rich repiner and household drudge!
 God pity them both! and pity us all, who vainly the dreams of youth recall.
 For of all sad words of tongue or pen, the saddest are these: "It might have been."
 Ah, well! for us all some sweet hope lies deeply buried from human eyes;
 And, in the hereafter, angels may roll the stone from its grave away!

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